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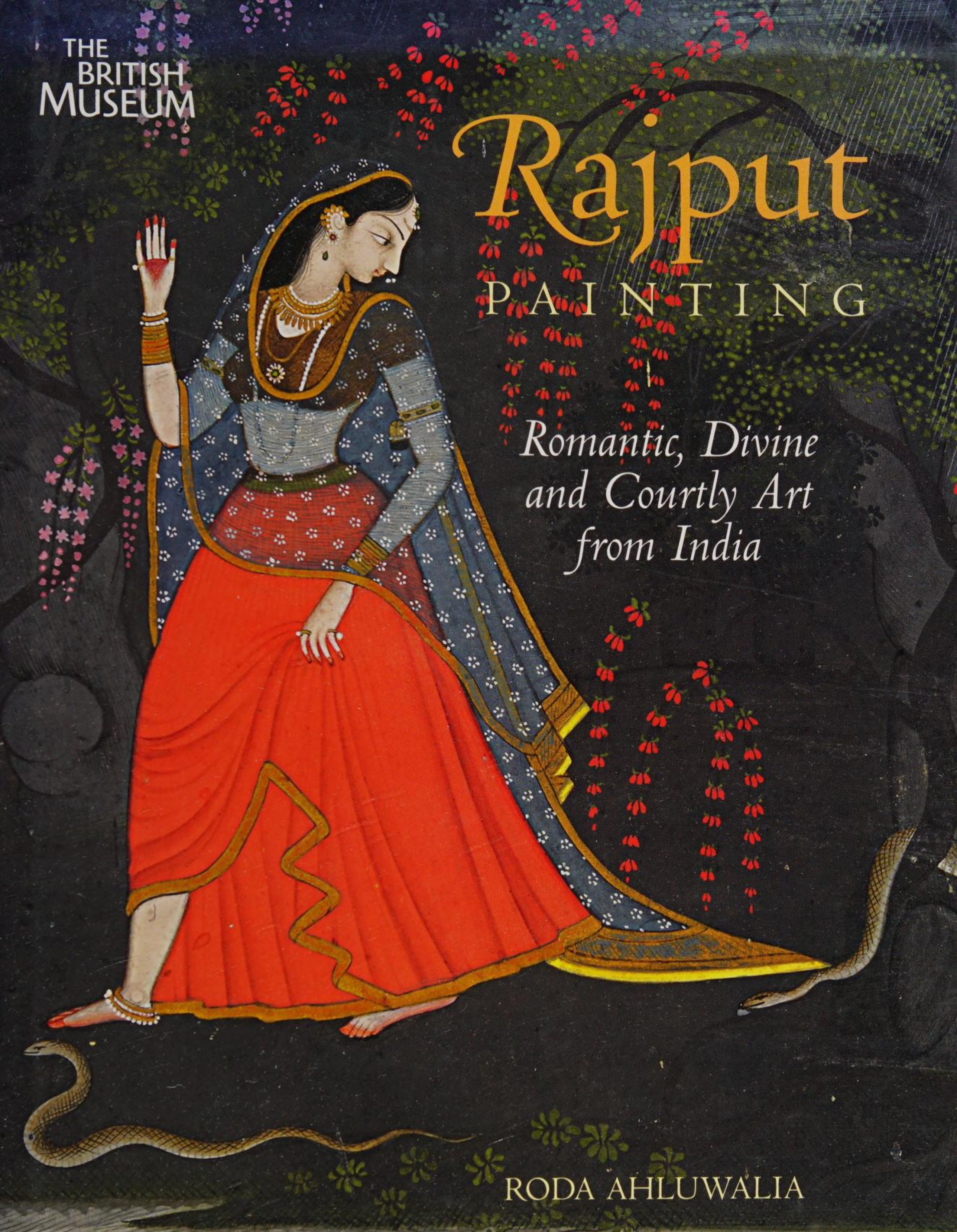
Rajput PAINTING

Romantic, Divine and Courtly Art from India



RODA AHLUWALIA

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To enter the world of Rajput painting is to enter a dream world of fantasy and colour, of heroes and heroines gorgeously attired in brilliant hues, of epic poems and love songs, of courtly majesty and India's romantic past. This beautiful survey conveys the spirit of the great Hindu classical tradition that existed in all the arts, including painting and literature, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

In this richly illustrated book, Roda Ahluwalia sets Rajput painting in its historical and art-historical background, looking at local styles in the principalities of Rajasthan, central India and the Punjab. She explores the themes – mainly taken from folk tales and epic literature, erotic and religious poems, myths, legends and music – as well as the influence of Mughal painting and the importance of the cult of Krishna. The illustrations, taken mainly from the superb collections of the British Museum and the British Library, include many previously unpublished images, allowing a rare insight into this world of colour and romance.

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Rajput Painting

Romantic, Divine and Courtly Art from India

Roda Ahluwalia

THE BRITISH MUSEUM PRESS

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Roda Ahluwalia has asserted the right to be identified
as the author of this work

First published in 2008 by The British Museum Press
A division of The British Museum Company Ltd
38 Russell Square, London WC1B 3QQ

www.britishmuseum.org

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-7141-2435-3

Designed and typeset in Garamond by Peter Ward
Printed in China by C&C Offset Printing Co., Ltd

Frontispiece: *Thakur Hari Singh of Chandawal.* Marwar, Rajasthan, 1760.
Opaque watercolour on paper, 27.2 x 23 cm. British Museum.
A portrait of the chieftain of the powerful Kumpawat subclan (*khanf*) of the Rathors of Marwar.

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FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE AIM OF this book is to provide a concise overview of the history of Rajput painting, beautifully illustrated with works from the rich collections of the British Museum and the British Library. Since Ananda Coomaraswamy published his landmark book *Rajput Painting* in 1916, major court styles have been identified, paintings have been placed in their historical, regional and religious context and the importance of the Indian aesthetic *rasa* theory as a means of their appreciation has been recognized. Some grey areas in this vast subject persist, however, because of a lack of inscriptional and other information. Unless further discoveries come to light, attributions will, in some cases, remain obscure. This book, therefore, does not seek to be the definitive statement on Rajput painting; rather it aims to showcase the paintings in the British Museum collection in their correct context, with as much background information as is available to date. It should also be noted that the works discussed here are miniature paintings on paper; mural paintings and paintings on cloth are beyond the scope of this book, as are the many styles of paintings from smaller principalities and minor Rajput kingdoms in Gujarat and Nepal.

I am most grateful to Sheila Canby for spearheading this project and for her support, guidance and faith in me throughout this endeavour; I am also grateful to her and Jeremiah P. Losty for reading the manuscript and making invaluable comments. At the British Museum I would like to thank Robert Knox, Richard Blurton, Maureen Theobald and Paul Bevan in the Department of Asia; Kevin Lovelock and John Williams in the Department of Photography and Imaging; and Teresa Francis and Felicity Maunder, my editors at the British Museum Press. In London I am grateful above all to Robert Skelton for his invaluable help and generosity with his time, and to Rosemary Crill, Dr Andrew Topsfield, Dr Anna Dallapiccola and Sir Howard Hodgkin. In India I would like to thank Professor B.N. Goswamy; Dr V.C. Ohri; Dr Asok Kumar Das; Naval Krishna; Princess Rajyashree Kumariji of Bikaner; Thakur Dalip Singh and Satendra Singh of the Gangasinghji trust in Bikaner; Bhawani Singh of Jaipur; Sudhir Kasliwal; Dr Prem Sharma, Director, and Gagan Khanna and Mr Negi of the Himachal State Museum in Shimla; Dr Vidya Nand Singh, Director, and Poonam Khanna of the Punjab State Museum in Chandigarh; Dr Rita Sharma of the National Museum in Delhi; and in the USA Dr Navina Haidar and Dr Catherine Benkaim. Finally I thank my family, Harmohan, Rishad and Rohan, for their patience and encouragement while writing this book.

(*opposite*) Map of India, showing the major centres of Rajput Painting.

CHAPTER ONE

History and Religion

RAJPUT PAINTING presents a world of fantasy and colour, of heroes and heroines gorgeously attired in brilliant hues, of epic poems and love songs, of courtly majesty and India's romantic past. Delighting the senses, this visual panorama conveys the spirit of the Hindu classical tradition that existed in painting, poetry, literature and dance – indeed all the arts – from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Depictions of religious and literary Hindu texts, which formed the major content of Rajput painting, provide glimpses of medieval Hindu culture and its world view. Portraits of rulers participating in rituals or the royal pastime of the hunt, completely alien to the timeless Hindu world of gods and goddesses, were influenced by the Mughals' emphasis on the precise recording of ancestral lineage and history. The patrons of Rajput painting were members of the royalty and nobility of the many courts of Rajasthan, central India and the Punjab hill states, an area stretching from the foothills of the western Himalayas south-eastwards to the central region of the Gangetic plain and west to the barren desert of the Thar in Rajasthan. Rajput painting may therefore be defined as art covering the great expanse of northern India (excluding the north-east), but more precisely as painting patronized by the Rajput rulers of the many principalities in the north of the subcontinent.

(*opposite*). Detail of fig. 7, 'Varaha avatara: the boar incarnation of Vishnu'.

Commissioned by royalty and nobility and meant for their eyes only, these jewel-like paintings were kept in *pothikanas* (store-rooms) in royal palaces and treasured in the same way as jewellery; indeed both paintings and jewellery formed part of princesses' dowries for royal marriage. A painting was usually small enough to be held in the palm of a hand and admired, and natural and vegetable pigments were used in their making. The painters who produced this dynamic art belonged to the lowly *tarkhan* or carpenter class, and the profession was passed down from fathers and uncles to sons and nephews.

The word Rajput is derived from *Raja-putra*, meaning 'sons of kings', identifying Rajput rulers as *kshatriyas*, or the ruling Hindu caste, who, together with the brahmins, or priests, were the main preservers of Hindu culture in the northern area of a country historically ravaged by invaders entering through the Himalayan mountain passes. The origins of the Rajputs, who claim descent from the gods and heroes of India's ancient epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, are shrouded in legend and myth. Their recorded history, as extolled by courtly bards in long poems of ancestry, lineage and heroic and

military exploits recounted through the ages, begins around the seventh century AD. Their social structure was that of the clan: chieftains holding *jagirs*, or fiefs, pledged loyalty to the clan ruler, who in turn supported his chieftains. The ruler of a clan in Rajasthan or central India, known as *raja*, *rana* or *rao*, ruled according to the basic tenet of *primus inter pares*, or 'first among equals', whereby all chieftains of the clan, usually related members of a larger family, were considered equal and sat in social hierarchical sequence on either side of the ruler at his court. Chieftains in the Punjab hills, however, known as *ranas* or *thakurs*, who had lived in that region since ancient times, were not necessarily from the same extended family as their rajas and were either Rajput adventurers who had settled in the hill region subduing fiefdoms, or other hill chieftains who had risen to power. Rajput history abounds in chronicles of intense loyalty as well as strife between feudal lords and their masters.

Ancient Indian culture was rooted in the unifying idea of an absolute presence made manifest in a multiplicity of forms. Traceable from 1500 BC, this philosophical tradition endured throughout the first millennia AD, shaping the ideology behind all religious sculptural and temple art. Muslim Turkish invaders, known collectively as the Delhi Sultans, established themselves in northern and central India from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, bringing with them the new religion of Islam and different ideals. A lasting and profound influence of Islam on Hindu culture was the importance that the former placed on the written word and the art of the book, for illumination enhanced the sacred word of the Koran. To the ancient Hindus, however, sound was considered sacred and their vast corpus of Vedic, Puranic and epic literature had been preserved by memory through the ages, as correct intonation and pronunciation were necessary in order for *mantras* (prayers with magical potency) and chants to be effective. Therefore, illustrated Hindu texts were virtually non-existent. Buddhists and Jains, however, commissioned illustrated religious texts, at first on palm leaves and then on paper, preserved in Buddhist monasteries (tenth to eleventh centuries) and Jain temple libraries (twelfth to fifteenth centuries).[1] Murals on palace and mansion walls and painting on the inner walls of Buddhist cave sanctuaries, together with sculptural stone images of Hindu temple deities, were the main artistic expressions in the subcontinent before the Islamic invasions. The Delhi Sultanate and subsequently the Mughal influx changed traditional Indian ideas; books became precious objects and illustrations to written manuscripts were prized. Before Babur, the first Mughal ruler, established his dynasty in India in 1526, Hindu Rajput rulers and the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagara in the south coexisted with Muslim hegemonies in Delhi, Malwa, Jaunpur and Gujarat, as well as the Bahmani Sultanate in the Deccan, and a gradual assimilation of Islamic culture led to the beginnings of secular and religious book illustrations.

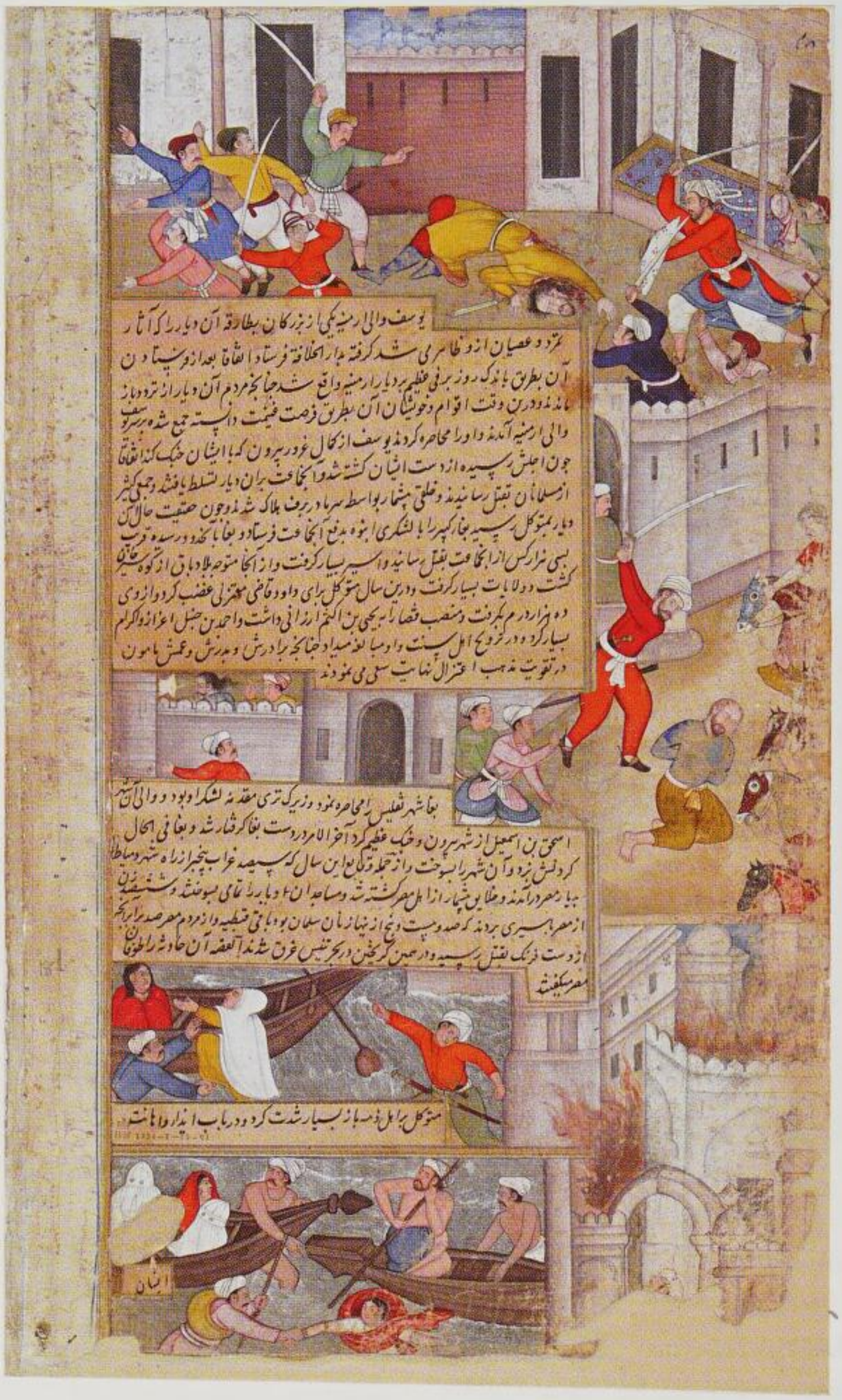
These early illustrations were iconic in character, similar to those in Jain manuscripts that depicted incidents in the lives of their *jinas* (spiritual leaders; *jina* means 'conqueror of desires') beside religious text and narrative relating

to legends surrounding the gods. Early Rajput manuscript painting on paper coexisted with later Jain manuscript illustrations and Sultanate painting commissioned by the Delhi Sultans in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries. Fig. 1, a folio from the tenth Book of the *Bhagavata Purana* (legends of the deity Krishna), approximately dating to the second quarter of the sixteenth century, is an example of early Rajput painting. The horizontal registers painted in primary background colours, in which wide-eyed and curvaceous figures play out their part in the legendary narrative, represent the 'Early Rajput' style in its most vigorous form.

Babur (r. 1526–30), founder of the Mughal dynasty, whose lineage extended to the Turkish conqueror Tamerlane and the Mongol Genghis Khan (hence the name Mughal), established himself in India after the decisive battle of Panipat in 1526. Mughal rule and culture began to have an impact on the Rajput kingdoms, both politically and culturally, during the reign of his grandson Akbar. Akbar (r. 1556–1605), one of India's greatest rulers, brought all the states in Rajasthan (except Mewar), Malwa, Gujarat, Bengal, Kashmir, Kabul,

1. 'The wedding of Aniruddha and Rocana'. Folio from a *Bhagavata Purana* manuscript (Book 10, ch. 61), 1525–30. Opaque watercolour on paper, 17.5 x 23 cm. British Museum.

Krishna's grandson Aniruddha and Rocana throw ghee and grains into the sacred fire, while rows of men and women observe the wedding ritual in the register above. Musicians play in a compartment in the lower register to the left. Aniruddha is shown again (in blue) with his father, Pradyumna, and his uncle Samba in discussion with King Rukmi (Rocana's father) and his advisers in the other two compartments in the lower register.



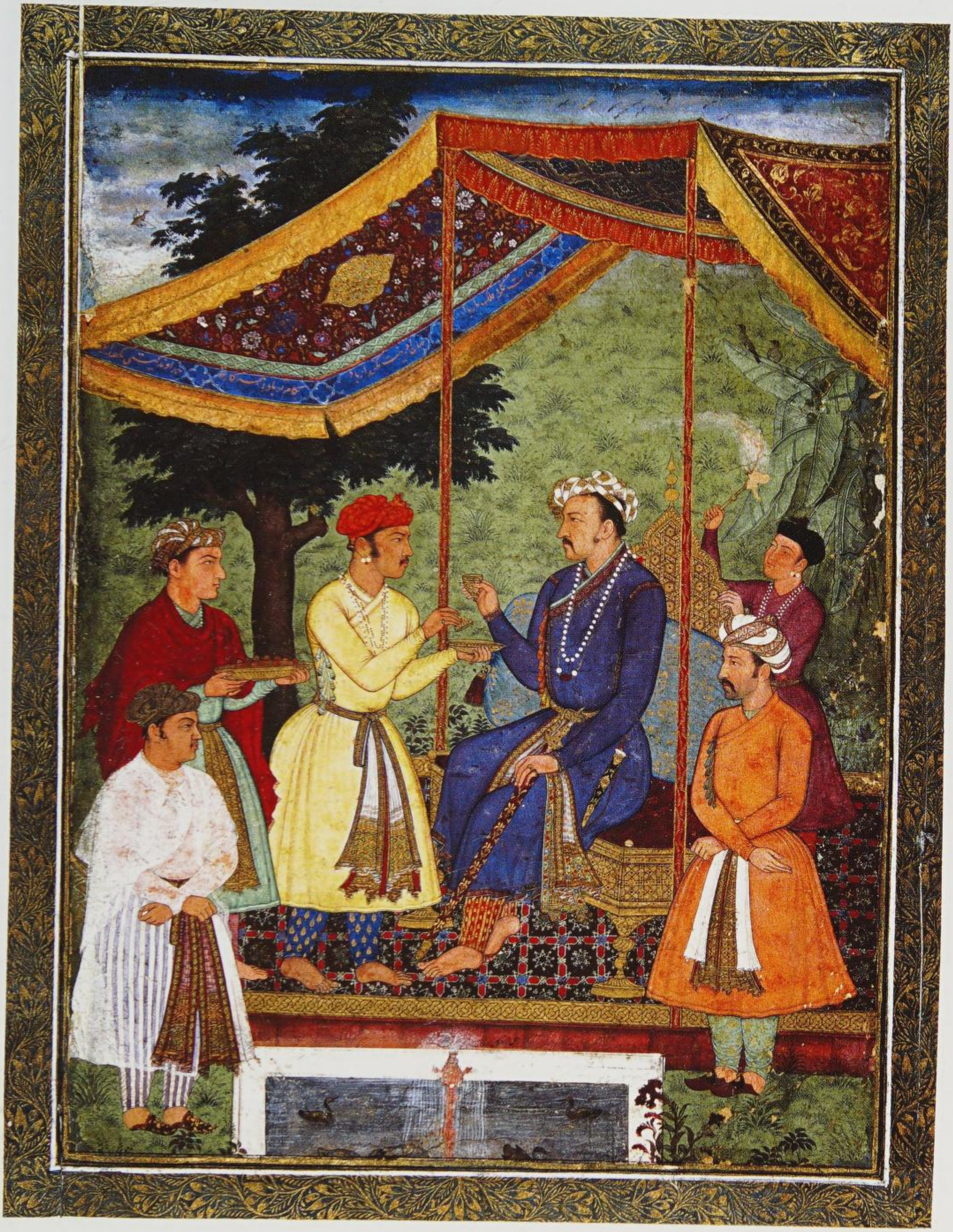
2. 'Destruction of the tomb of Husayn at Kerbela by order of the 'Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil, and other events of his reign'. From the *Tarikh i-Alfi* (History of the Millennium). Mughal, 1590. 40.2 x 22 cm. British Museum.

3 (*opposite*). 'Emperor Jahangir drinking wine under a canopy', by Manohar. Mughal, 1605–6. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 20.5 x 15.4 cm. British Museum.

Kandahar, and many of the Punjab hill states and the Deccani kingdom of Ahmadnagar under his domain. Akbar gained the loyalty of Rajput chieftains by pursuing a policy of religious tolerance and matrimonial alliances with Hindu Rajput princesses. Rulers of Rajasthan, central India and hill chieftains of the western Himalayas all became vassals of the vast Mughal empire and served in the Mughal army as generals, thereby acquiring wealth and power. Akbar laid the foundations of empire by establishing a sound administrative system and unifying northern India into a homogenous, stable entity.

Akbar's interest in the arts led to a dynamic burgeoning of Indo-Islamic architecture and the formation of the Mughal painting style, an amalgamation of Persian refinement, European naturalism and elements of indigenous painting. At first the young emperor commissioned illustrations of action-filled tales, which probably stirred his youthful imagination, such as the *Hamzanama* (tales of the Prophet's uncle, Hamza); later ancestral histories and his own biography, the *Akbarnama*, included illustrations of the written manuscript, undertaken by a vast and highly organized studio of calligraphers, painters, book-binders and librarians. A folio from the *Tarikh i-Alfi* (fig. 2), with jewel-like colours, diagonal lines providing a sense of spatial illusion, dynamic action and naturalistic placement of figures in space, portrays the new style of painting developed during Akbar's reign, which had an enormous impact on the simply executed mural and early book illustrations patronized by Rajput rulers. By establishing a peaceful and tolerant empire and a dynamic patronage of the arts, Akbar was directly responsible for the great flowering of Rajput painting, as nobles in his court and Rajput princes serving under him set up painting ateliers and extensively patronized the art of the book.

Akbar's son and successor, Jahangir (r. 1605–27), was an aesthete who reduced his father's vast studio to a select few artists who excelled in the art of portraiture and produced works of great subtlety and refinement. While Akbar promoted vast historical tomes, Jahangir insisted on portraits exhibiting natural likeness and psychological depth. 'Emperor Jahangir drinking wine



under a canopy' (fig. 3) shows the change from the dynamic action-packed scenes of Akbar's reign to intimate court paintings in which the emperor's visage and those of his sons and courtiers are individually emphasized.

The imperial painting style continued in a similar vein under Shah Jahan (r. 1627–58) and during the early years of Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707), albeit with a degree of rigidity compared with the fluency and innovation of Jahangiri-period painting. The vast empire, however, was showing signs of crumbling owing to a lack of effective leadership and the consequent stagnation of its economies and administration. Aurangzeb reversed the tolerant policies shown by his predecessors towards Hindus and alienated Rajput loyalties. This, together with his determination to bring the Deccani Sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda under Mughal hegemony, substantially weakened the empire. His orthodox religiosity forbade music, painting and all the arts, which by now had become part of the Mughal legacy and had been handed down to the Rajput courts. Mughal painting was crippled towards the end of the seventeenth century and the royal atelier virtually disintegrated; painting in the distant Rajput courts, however, continued to flourish throughout the seventeenth century.

Three successive weak rulers led to the gradual disintegration of the empire, which received a shattering blow from the invasion by the Persian Nadir Shah in 1739. Imperial authority was virtually eliminated, the Mughal emperor became a mere figurehead and Rajput kingdoms wrestled for power within their own states and against each other. Anarchy and bloody civil wars weakened the states in Rajasthan and depleted their coffers. By the mid-eighteenth century two other peoples rose to power – the Marathas in the Deccan and the Afghans in the Punjab – filling the vacuum created by the ruined Mughal empire. Maratha armies under powerful generals extorted money from the weakened Rajasthani states after being called in to bolster their flagging condition.

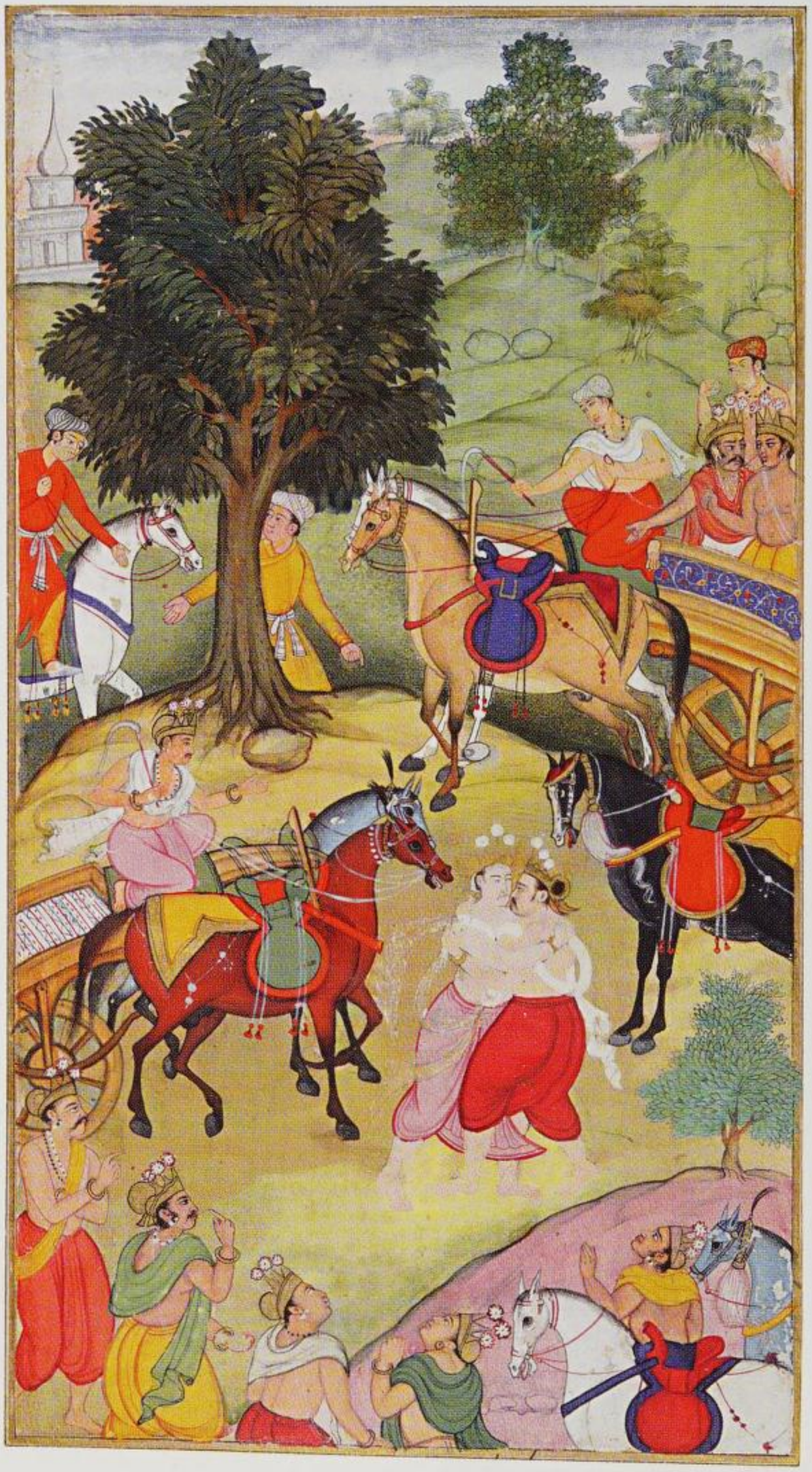
For nearly two hundred years from the time of their subjugation by Akbar, the hill states were tributary to the Mughal empire. Their isolated location, however, enabled them to survive with relatively little interference from the Mughals, particularly during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Encouraged by the anarchy that prevailed in the plains after Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the hill states started power struggles to recover lost territories. In 1752 Punjab acceded to the Afghan Ahmad Shah Durrani, but apart from Kashmir the central and eastern hill states were only nominally subject to Kabul's jurisdiction.

A brief flowering of painting during the reign of Muhammad Shah (r. 1719–48), a weak and ineffectual ruler but a patron of the arts, brought about an interlude of creativity in the Mughal court, influencing painting in the Rajput kingdoms, particularly in the Punjab hills. The latter, popularly known as Pahari (from the hills) painting, continued to flourish during the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, producing some of the most enchanting and lyrical works ever made by Indian artists; the general trend of painting in Rajasthan, however, was now stiff and conventionalized, perhaps as a result of a lack of clear direction from patrons and the turbulent times. The painting

4. 'A noble lady and attendants enjoying fireworks'. Mughal, 1740. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 21.2 x 13 cm. British Museum.

The Muslim festival of Shab-i barat, held in Sha'ban, the eighth month of the Islamic calendar, is celebrated with prayers, the distribution of alms, feasting and fireworks.

of a noble lady and attendants enjoying fireworks (fig. 4) is typical of the Muhammad Shah period, in which clean outlines, large expanses of white or grey architecture and tall, stylized figures in pursuit of leisurely activities are rendered with a degree of rigidity, a far cry from the dynamism of Akbari paintings or the soft naturalism of Jahangiri works.[2] Though the Mughal empire continued as a shadow of its former self until the mid-nineteenth century,

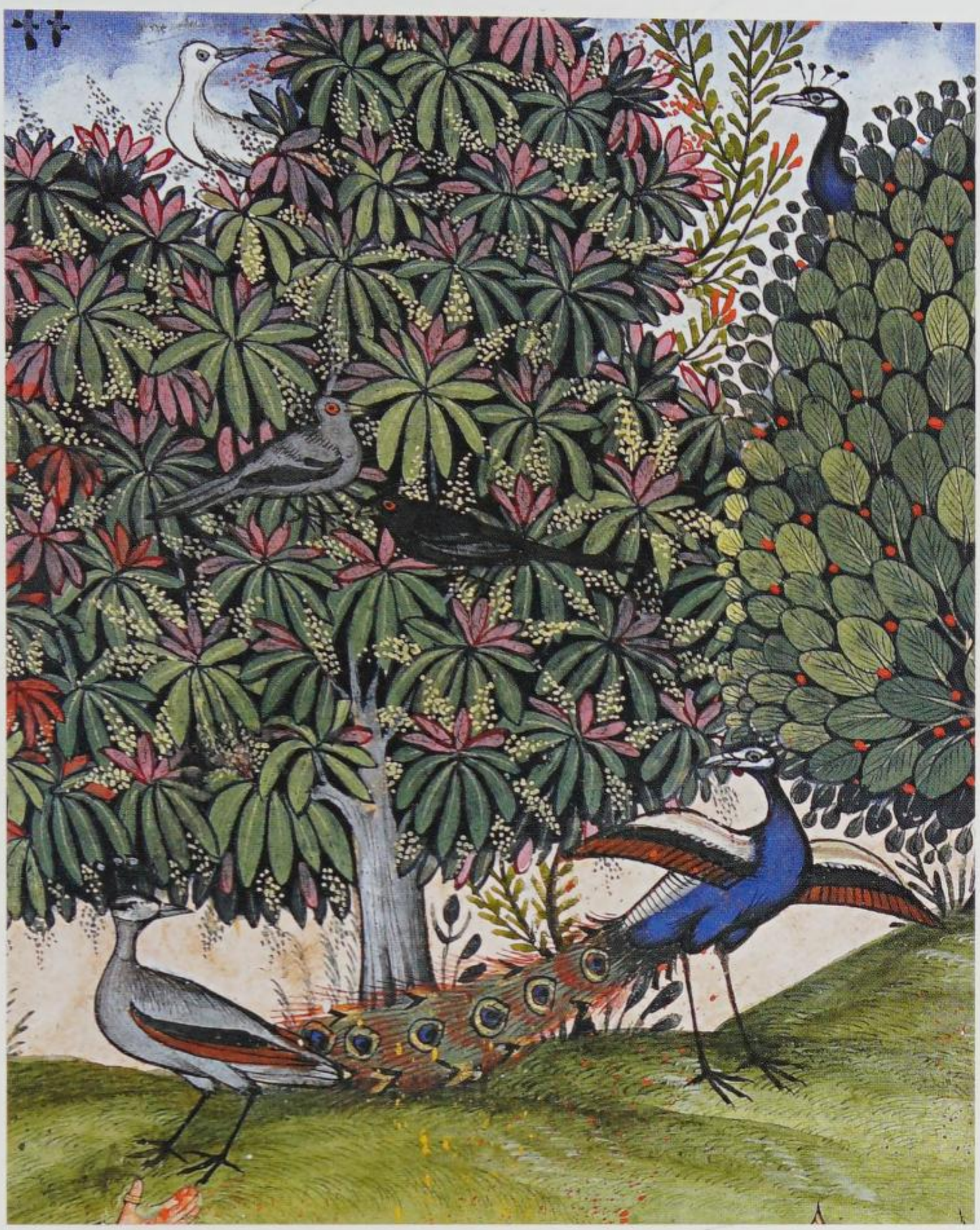


5 (*above and detail opposite*). 'Karna and Yudhisthira wrestling', by Makara. Folio from a *Razmnama* manuscript (ch. 49, *Karna Parva*). Sub-imperial Mughal, 1598–9. Opaque watercolour on paper, 21 x 11.7 cm. British Museum.

effective power shifted to the Mughal provinces of Oudh and Murshidabad and to the British in Bengal from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. An increasingly Westernized aesthetic of the so-called 'Company School' of painting developed as the British officers of the East India Company became art patrons.

The transformation of the imperial Mughal style into Mughalized Rajput painting has been called 'sub-imperial' or 'popular' Mughal painting by scholars. Painted either by artists who had left imperial studios for other employment or by those emulating Mughal works of art, it would be best to describe these paintings as simplified versions of the imperial style, incorporating traits of that style in varying degrees. Akbar encouraged his nobles to commission illustrated manuscripts of the great Hindu epics, the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, which had been translated into Persian at his command, and some copies may have been commissioned by him, executed in his atelier by second-tier artists, as gifts to princes or nobles in his realm.[3] Fig. 5, a folio from a *Razmnama* manuscript of 1598–9 (a translation of the Hindu epic the *Mahabharata*), is an example of a sub-imperial Mughal manuscript.[4] When Jahangir succeeded to the throne in 1605, he chose to retain select artists from Akbar's large studio. Many others departed, seeking commissions from Mughal nobility or Rajput royalty, often adapting their styles to suit their patrons' needs and bringing an element of the Mughal aesthetic to their new masters' studios. Artists also dispersed when Aurangzeb forbade all forms of art. Agra has been proposed as a centre of the 'popular Mughal' style of painting, as certain Jain manuscripts influenced by the Mughal style, dated 1610 and 1624, were painted in that city. It is however, more than likely that many of these works were executed in nobles' mansions and royal courts spread throughout the vast Mughal empire.[5]

The Manley Ragamala, an example of the 'popular Mughal' style with a more vigorous blend of Mughal and Rajput stylistic elements, was probably commissioned by a Rajput patron, as *ragamala* paintings, or visual renderings



6 (*opposite and detail left*). 'Vasanta Ragini'. Folio from the Manley Ragamala. Popular Mughal, 1610. Opaque water-colour on paper, 26 x 18 cm. British Museum.

'His topknot, bound with peacock's feathers, is erect: his face, because of the burgeoning mango-shoot is as a flower. Elephant-like in the forest joyfully he wanders among the *gopis*, [such is] *Vasanta Ragini*.'
K. Ebeling, *Ragamala Painting*, p. 118.

of musical modes, were not popular at the Mughal court or within the elitist circle of Islamic nobles in charge of outlying provinces. In 'Vasanta Ragini' (fig. 6), from that series, the figures are simplified versions of those in early Akbari-period painting, and the trees and landscape are shaded in emulation of the naturalistic style preferred by the Mughal emperor, similar to paintings from a *Tutinama* manuscript of 1580 commissioned by Akbar.[6] This suggests that the artist of the Manley Ragamala (which has a probable date of 1610) had received some training in Akbar's atelier before working on the *ragamala*. In order to suit the subject matter and the patron, the artist has used brighter colours, such as *peori* yellow (a pigment derived from the urine of cows fed mango leaves), red, green and pink, and a stylized version of trees in keeping with Rajput taste.

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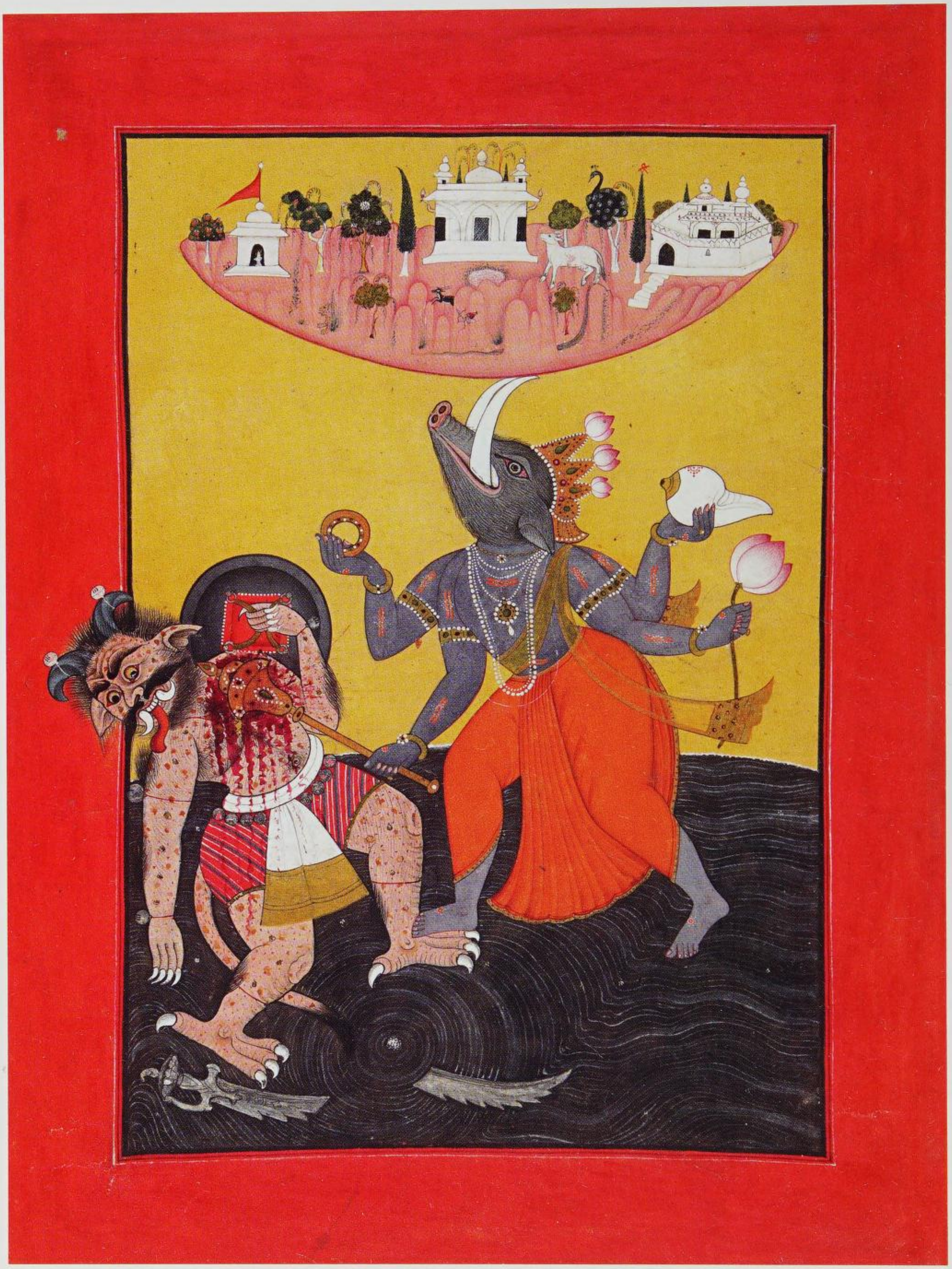


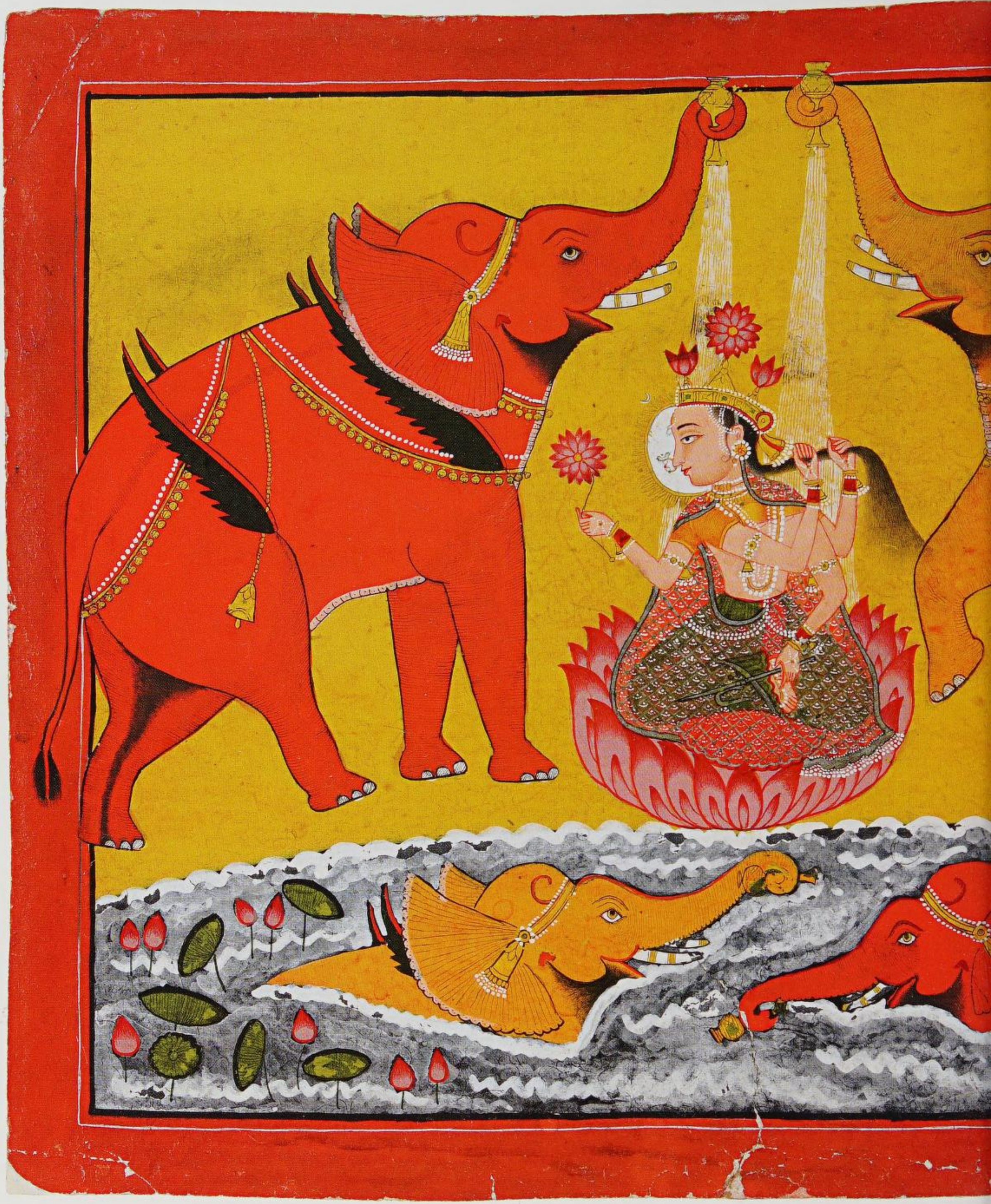
7 (*opposite*). 'Varaha avatara: the boar incarnation of Vishnu'. Folio from a *Dasavatara* (Ten Incarnations of Vishnu) series. Mankot, Punjab hills, 1700–10. Opaque watercolour on paper, 29.6 x 19.7 cm. British Museum.

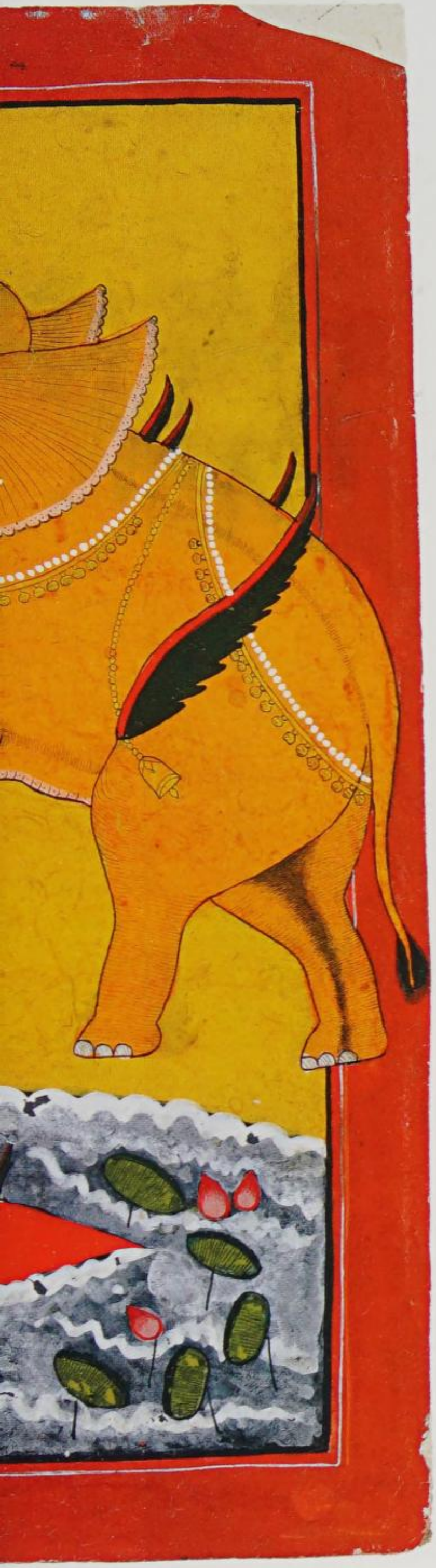
The god Vishnu incarnates as a boar in order to rescue the earth from the primeval waters. Vishnu bears the earth (sometimes shown as a female) aloft on his tusks, while battling a demon in the waters with his mace. His other attributes of conch shell, disc and lotus are held in each of his arms.

8. 'The holy family of Shiva on Mount Kailasha'. Kangra, Punjab hills, 1775–80. Brush drawing on paper, 20.7 x 14.5 cm. British Museum.

Shiva and Parvati and their sons Ganesha, the elephant-headed deity, and Karttikeya, the god of war (with many arms), are depicted in a charming domestic scene, together with Nandi the bull and a lion, Shiva and Parvati's respective mounts.

IN MATTERS OF RELIGION the Rajputs practised Hinduism, known as *sanatana dharma* (the eternal law), which, more than a religion, is a way of life, regulating the culture, customs and religious beliefs of a Hindu from birth until death; the Rajputs steadfastly held onto these beliefs throughout the Islamic invasions of northern India. The bewildering array of gods and goddesses that comprise the Hindu pantheon are believed to emanate from a unifying presence of Absolute Consciousness: a Hindu may choose to worship any deity in any one or a multiplicity of their manifested forms. Ancient Indian Vedic





9. 'Gajalakshmi: the goddess Lakshmi, symbol of wealth and prosperity, seated on a lotus and being lustrated by two elephants'. Bundi, Rajasthan, 1700–15. Opaque watercolour on paper, 22.9 x 27.5 cm. British Museum.

and metaphysical thought, dating from approximately 1500 BC to 400 BC, gradually gave way to *bhakti*, the dogma of faith or devotion to a personal god; Vaishnavism and Shaivism became the two principal *bhakti* movements on the subcontinent. Literary evidence of the growth of *bhakti* is found in the *Bhagavad Gita* (first to third century), in which Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, emphasizes that any devotee with faith in Him will assuredly attain spiritual salvation. Vaishnavism expounds the myths surrounding the ten incarnations, or *avataras*, of the great god Vishnu who descended to earth when necessary to vanquish evil forces and thereby establish harmony. A powerful painting from the hill state of Mankot in the Punjab region depicts Vishnu's boar incarnation or *Varaha avatara* (fig. 7). Among Vishnu's other incarnations, the cults of Krishna and Rama command the largest number of devoted followers.

Shaivites worship the many manifestations of the enigmatic god Shiva, the Mahayogi (greatest of all yogis), who lived on Mount Kailasha and 'played' against evil when called upon to do so. A gentle drawing from the Punjab hill region (fig. 8) depicts Shiva as an ascetic with his family, all of whom are lesser deities in their own right. Devi, a generic term for 'the great goddess', is the third major deity in the Hindu pantheon. She is worshipped as Lakshmi (fig. 9), consort of Vishnu, or as Parvati, consort of Shiva, who plays a motherly yet divine role in establishing Shiva's family. She is also worshipped as the supreme deity in tantrism. The ancient goddess Durga, who was given powers by all the gods in order to vanquish the buffalo demon, and the horrific black-bodied goddess

Kali, worshipped by the Rajputs before battle, are two of Devi's many manifested forms.

Krishna, the eighth incarnation of Vishnu and one of the most popular of all gods in the Hindu pantheon, is of paramount importance in Rajput painting. *Bhakti*, or devotion to Krishna, encompassed all the emotions associated with love, which are felt by the devotee towards Krishna: *viraha*, akin to the pangs caused by separation from one's lover; motherly affection, as felt for the infant Krishna; and intense love and devotion to him as a deity. The popularity and growth of Krishna worship can be traced through religious texts such as the *Bhagavad Gita* (first to third century) and the *Harivamsa* (fourth century), in which he assumes the role of a folk hero. The later *Bhagavata Purana* (ninth century) however, eulogizes Krishna's myths in the land of Vraja (a region near modern Vrindavana and Mathura) and proclaims him as a supreme deity. Saints such as Vallabhacharya (1479–1531) and Chaitanya (1486–1533) interpreted his worship in different ways and set up sectarian regional practices in Rajasthan and Bengal respectively. In Krishna's *lila*, or divine 'play' on earth as a human, he revelled in the pastures of Vraja as a simple boy attending cows, flirted with the village maidens on the banks of the Yamuna (fig. 10) and played his enchanted flute in the forests. These enduring legends appealed tremendously to the Indian psyche, and his role as a loving godhead permeated the length and breadth of the subcontinent.

Krishna *bhakti* inspired a great outpouring of devotional literature by poet saints who recounted the exploits of Krishna in the rhythmic cadences of Braj Bhasa, a vernacular dialect that was first used in the area of Vraja and then gained popularity with followers of the Vallabhacharya sect and other Krishna devotees in Rajasthan and central India. This literary movement seemed to grip India's imagination and Rajput royalty began to commission expansive illustrated manuscripts that represented *bhakti* literature visually. It can be said that the *bhakti* movement, coupled with the stability of Akbar's reign and his promotion of the arts, led to the beginnings of the golden age of Rajput painting.

10 (*opposite*). 'Krishna and Radha on the banks of the Yamuna river'. Possibly Guler, Punjab hills, 1800–10. Opaque watercolour on paper, 17.6 x 11.3 cm. British Museum.

CHAPTER TWO

Romance, Divinity and Courtly Portraiture

THE ENCHANTING LADY in fig. 11, a 'heroine who braves the dangers of the night to meet her lover', personifies the dominant theme of Rajput painting: love, both romantic and divine. Paintings in the Hindu classical tradition were a visual expression of popular religious literature and poetry, and the themes of romance, heroism and devotion to a deity were concurrent in both word and image. Indian folk tales and epic literature, love songs chanted throughout the land and religious poems, myths and legends from the *Puranas* (ancient stories pertaining to the cults of Shaiva, Vaishnava and Devi) were the primary sources of Rajput painting. Portraiture was alien to Hindu culture and took precedence as a direct influence of Mughal painting.

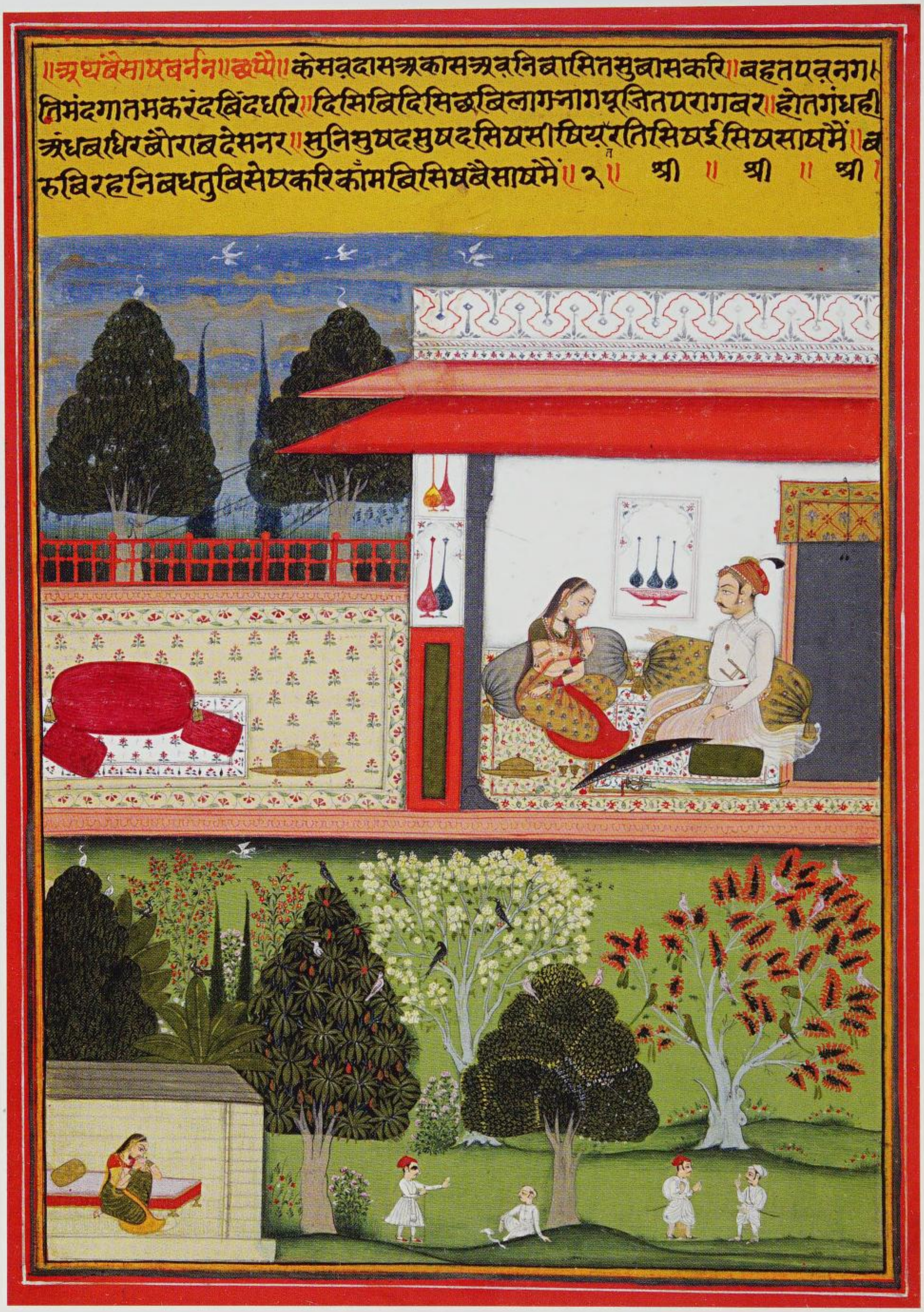
Artists painting in the literary tradition usually strove to convey the metaphorical content of the written word by drawing images that were taken literally from the verse. Ornament, or *alamkara*, was central to classical Sanskrit literature and the arts, and the puns, metaphors and allusions found in classical Hindu literature were transformed into the emotional content and symbolism of Rajput painting. The relationship of word to image was exact, as can be seen by comparing the following verse by the poet Keshavdas (inscribed above the illustration) with the imagery in fig. 12:

> . . . the earth and sky are filled with fragrance. Breezes, full of fragrance, are blowing gently. All around there is fragrant beauty. But the fragrance is blinding for the bee and painful for the lover who is away from home. The heroine says to her beloved, 'I pray you, having taught me the pleasures of love making, do not talk of leaving in the month of *Vaisakh*, as the arrows of *Kama* (the god of love) are hard to bear in separation'.[1]

The shield near the hero, the sword by his side and the dagger tucked into his belt suggest that he is about to leave for war. The foreground of the painting depicts travellers, one of whom is blindfolded, indicating that he is as blinded by the pain of separation from his beloved as the bee who, while sucking nectar from a fragrant blossom, does not see the lotus flower closing around

11 (*opposite*). 'Abhisarika Nayika: A heroine who braves the dangers of the night to meet her lover'. Garhwal, Punjab hills, 1780–90. Opaque watercolour on paper, 21 x 13.8 cm. British Museum.

'Pull up your anklets.
Muffle the jingling girdle
With your hands
And walking on the path,
Mingle your body with the dark.
For soon the demon moon will rise
To watch the joys of love,
The lotus blooming in delight.'
W.G. Archer, *Love Songs of Vidyapati*, p. 102.


॥अथ बैसाष बर्नन॥ छप्पै॥ केसव़दास अकास अव़नि बासित सुबास करि॥ बहत पव़न गा
ति मंद गा तमकरंद बिंद धरि॥ दिसि बिदिसि छबि लाग न्याग पूजित पराग बर॥ होत गंध ही
अंध बधिर बौराव देस नर॥ सुनि सुषद सुषद सिष सी षिय़ रति सिष ई सिष साष में॥ ब
रुबि रहनि बधतु बिसेष करि काँम बिसिष बैसाष में॥ २॥ श्री॥ श्री॥ श्री॥

him at sunset. The beloved heroine, seated, downcast and alone at home, signifies the emotion of *viraha*, the lovelorn feelings of separated lovers, a potent sentiment often shown in Rajput painting.

The ancient Indian aesthetic code of *rasa*, literally meaning flavour or sentiment, as savoured by Rajput court patrons and practised by their artists, was concerned with the mood, emotional content and inner significance of a painting rather than the line and verisimilitude of European aesthetics or the naturalization and refinement that epitomized Mughal painting.[2] The *rasa* theory of aesthetics applied simultaneously to the creation and appreciation of the performing and visual arts, and was the common thread linking all the arts, their raison d'être. Nine emotional states – love, mirth, sorrow, anger, heroism, fear, disgust, astonishment and tranquillity – were experienced according to the corresponding *rasa*, or flavour, conveyed by the art object.[3] The connoisseur of a painting or dance, the reader of literature or a poem was supposed to be a *rasika*, one who understood immediately what the artist was trying to convey and experienced the equivalent *rasa* in the process. *Sringara rasa*, or the erotic sentiment, is the main *rasa* expressed in most religious and literary themes of Rajput painting, conveying the emotion of love. Divine love, or *bhakti*, centred around the cult of Krishna, and the nuances of romantic love and situations experienced by lovers were described in various love poems, the hero and heroine often being none other than Krishna and Radha.

The tenth volume of the *Bhagavata Purana*, with its many depictions of incidents from Krishna's life or *lila* (play) on earth, inspired visual imagery illustrated as part of the manuscript, with Sanskrit text as captions on the painting or inscribed on the reverse. Krishna's early life was played out in the land of Vraja as a cowherd playing the flute and enslaving the hearts of all the *gopis* (village belles) or performing miracles and vanquishing evil forces.[4] The love of the *gopis* for Krishna, however, was always referred to as the yearning of the soul for the divine, and the theology of the *Bhagavata* emphasizes that the humans and animals engaging so intimately in his *lila* have reached a perfect form. A scene from the *Bhagavata* (fig. 13) captures the spirit of devotional love centred around Krishna: the infant Krishna enjoys a swing in the village surrounded by his foster parents and others, all of whose attention is focused on the blue-bodied image of the child deity.

The devotional spirit of the *Bhagavata* is transformed into the romantic, passionate love of Radha for Krishna in the enchanting *Gitagovinda* (song of the cowherd god), a poem composed by the twelfth-century Bengali poet Jayadeva. The *Gitagovinda* is full of erotic and passionate rhetoric, which was picked up by artists and given expression as sensual imagery depicting Krishna and Radha. That Radha represented the individual soul of the devotee surrendering herself totally to her lord – including the human emotions that must be overcome in order to complete that unequivocal surrender to god, such as her pride and sullenness when Krishna was not around – is

12 (*opposite*). 'The month of *Vaisakh* (April/May)'. Folio from a *baramasa* (song of the seasons) series. Amber, Rajasthan, 1700–05. Opaque watercolour on paper, 28.7 x 20.1 cm. British Museum.

difficult to see in fig. 10, a wonderful painting from the Punjab hills of the lovers. The *Gitagovinda* is explicitly sensual and celebrates the final union of the divine lovers after a period of separation and despair. The imagery of fig. 10 beautifully echoes that of the following verse:

> Your useless silence tortures me, frail Radha.
> Sing sweet lyrics in the mode of love!
> Tender girl destroy my pain with your eyes!
> Beautiful Radha, don't be indifferent!
> Don't elude me! I am deeply devoted to you.
> Lovely fool, I am here as your lover.[5]

13 (*opposite*). 'Baby Krishna on a swing'. Guler, Punjab hills, 1755–60. Opaque watercolour on paper, 28.7 x 20.1 cm. British Museum.

Krishna is depicted with his foster parents Nanda and Yashoda, his stepbrother Balarama and other villagers in this delightful composition set in idyllic country surroundings.

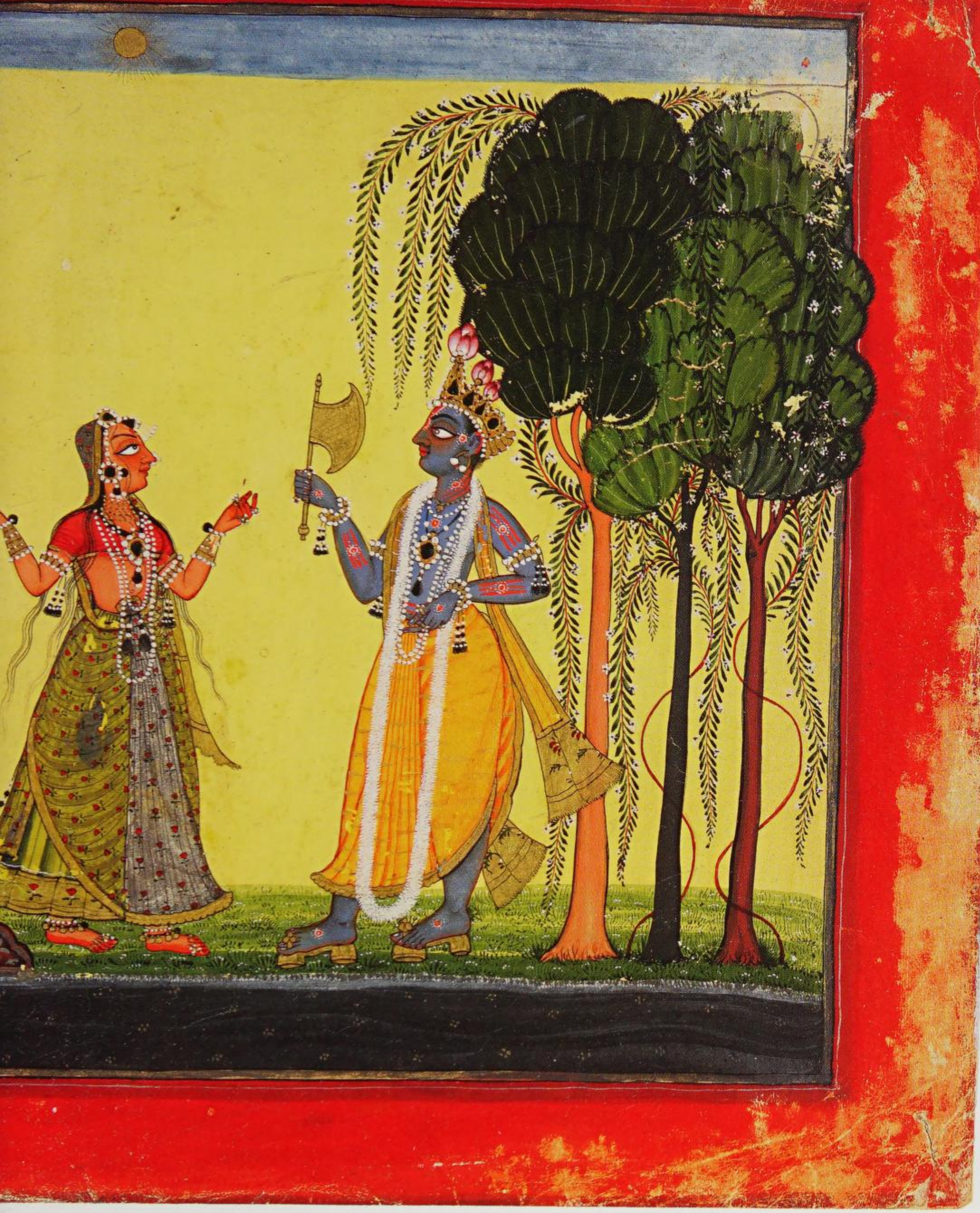
The *Gitagovinda* and other erotic verse that followed may have been influenced by Sufi love poetry, which used human love as a metaphor for love for the divine, such as the *Mrigavati* by Qutban or the *Madhu Malati* of Manjhana, popularized by the Islamic rulers of the Delhi Sultanate. As mentioned above, *sringara*, or the erotic sentiment, was central to the Indian aesthetic theory, and *kama*, or love, was an acceptable pursuit in the life of every householder, according to Hindu tradition. The four goals to be fulfilled by a Hindu were *dharma*, or duty; *kama*, or sensual pleasure; *artha*, or material wealth; and *moksa*, the final goal of spiritual liberation. Furthermore, the incarnation theory of Vaishnavism made it easy to accept Krishna as human as well as divine, and the boundaries of human and divine love appear to merge subtly in the Hindu literary and artistic world view. Barbara Stoler Miller suggests that 'the devotional lyrics of *bhakti* poetry in every Indian language suggest how completely religious, erotic and aesthetic meanings are integrated in this popular tradition'.[6] The *Gitagovinda* and later Vaishnavite devotional poetry transformed Krishna into the divine lover.

Among the various forms of poetry that exploited the moods and nuances of love, the *Rasamanjari* of the poet Bhanudatta (fifteenth century) and the *Rasikapriya* of Keshavdas (sixteenth century) became common subjects for Rajput paintings in the hills and plains respectively. Heroes and heroines were classified in myriad ways and the iconography for these classifications in literature became standardized visual compositions in painting. Though secular in content, the archetypal hero (*nayaka*) and heroine (*nayika*) were usually Krishna and Radha. In fig. 14, from a *Rasamanjari*, the heroine, who is classified as being 'clever in speech', persuades the weary traveller, none other than Krishna himself, to rest on the banks of a river; the reference in the verse, the sensuous drawing of 'jasmine creepers entwining *tamala* trees' and the bed laid out in the cool confines of the pavilion imply an invitation by the heroine to make love.

Many of these erotic and devotional poems were composed in Braj Bhasa, a dialect used in northern India, which made such poetry accessible to all. Sanskrit, employed for chanting prayers and reciting sacred texts such as the *Ramayana*, was the language of the elite brahmin caste and was gradually being replaced by vernacular dialects such as Bengali or Gujarati, which, together

14. 'Vag Vidhaghda Nayika: the heroine who is clever in speech'. Folio from a *Rasamanjari* series. Basohli, Punjab hills, 1660–70. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper adorned with beetle wings, 23.4 x 33 cm. British Museum.

'O traveller, the sun being piercingly hot today, it is proper for you to rest on the banks of the river adorned with rows of jasmine creepers entwining *tamala* trees.' M.S. Randhawa and S.D. Bhambri, *Basohli Paintings of the Rasamanjari*, p. 102.



with Braj Bhasa and Avadhi (used in the courts of north-eastern India), accompanied the great Puranic spiritual movement from the eleventh century onwards.[7]

Ragamala paintings – literally translated as 'a garland of musical melodies' – effectively brought music, poetry and painting together, for the paintings are a visual representation of verses that aspire to capture the essence of a musical melody, or *raga*. In the endeavour to amalgamate three different art forms, *ragamala* paintings serve to emphasize the difference between Indian and Western art. A *raga* (personified as male) usually has five *raginis* (female), as well as associations with seasons and times of day, according to the legendary Bharata, author of the *Natyashastra* (second century BC–second century AD), the first Indian treatise on music and dance. *Ragamala* paintings were extremely popular and were commissioned by almost all Rajput patrons in the vast area of north-west and central India that was the preserve of Rajput courtly culture.

Scholars have tried to identify a close relationship between the musical content of a *raga* and its equivalent *ragamala* painting, but have not been successful. This is because the only relationship between the music and its visual counterpart is the *rasa*, or flavour, common to both. The erotic sentiment between Radha and Krishna in fig. 15, for example, is the common flavour of the painting as well as the music, and this sentiment should be evoked when the connoisseur listens to the melody of Hindola Raga or views the painting.

15 (*opposite and detail above*). 'Hindola Raga'. Folio from a *ragamala* series. Jaipur, Rajasthan, 1800. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 24.7 x 19.5 cm. British Museum.

Hindola, the ancient swing festival celebrated in the month of *Sravana* (July/August), was appropriated into the Krishna cult. An illustration of Hindola Raga usually depicts Krishna and Radha on a swing looking at each other with eyes full of love.

The popular sentiment of love, or *sringara rasa*, developed as two distinct modes: love in union, usually understood when the couple is shown together, and love in separation, depicted by the anguished heroine alone, or with friendly animals in verdant landscape scenes, or sometimes with a female companion. Asavari Ragini, for example, a lonely tribal maiden, is usually shown with snakes as her companions, while she sings songs of unrequited love (see fig. 59, from Bikaner in Rajasthan).

The subject matter or iconography of a *ragamala* painting was derived from the words sung in a *raga* or *ragini*, rather than its musical content. These iconographies became standardized in different regions over a period of time; for example, a painting of Ramagari Ragini (fig. 16) from the small southern Rajasthani state of Sirohi would depict a seated couple, with the woman handing a garland to another woman as a sign of welcome;[8] a painting of Vasanta Ragini (fig. 6) would depict Krishna or a hero dancing, while ladies played musical instruments in celebration of spring, or *vasanta*; and a painting of Hindola Raga (fig. 15) would depict Krishna and Radha seated on a swing as the ancient swing festival of Hindola was appropriated into the Krishna cult. *Ragamala* paintings were commissioned as a series, the number of paintings varying from thirty-six or forty-two in Rajasthan to eighty-four in the hill region of the Himalayas, where *ragaputras*, or sons, were added to the basic families of *ragas* and *raginis*.

The principal theme of love in union or separation depicted in *ragamala* paintings was common to *baramasa*, or 'song of the seasons', paintings as well. *Baramasa* paintings demonstrating the relationship of lovers with the twelve months of the year provided visual imagery for *baramasa* poetry (see fig. 12). The Rajputs were a martial race, constantly battling each other and the Mughals; hence in *baramasa* paintings wives and lovers beg their men not to leave for war and try hard to keep them at home.

The epic poems of antiquity, the *Ramayana* (sixth–fourth century BC) and the *Mahabharata* (400 BC–AD 400), also formed the content of devotional illustrated manuscripts. The Sanskrit script would be painstakingly inscribed and artists would illustrate every important episode in the narrative. The *Ramayana* is an epic tale of the ultimate triumph of good over evil, chronicling the god king Rama, another incarnation of Vishnu, and his battle against the evil titan Ravana, whom he vanquishes (fig. 17). The *Mahabharata* is India's other great epic, describing the battle between two ancient ruling families, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, and the story of Krishna's revelation of truth to Arjuna, one of the Pandava brothers, on the battlefield, which forms the content of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the single most important scripture of Vaishnavism. The emperor Akbar had both epics translated into Persian and illustrated by his atelier, after which Rajput kings made their own illustrated manuscripts of the *Ramayana*, as the story of a god king, the epitome of virtuosity, generosity, duty, bravery and goodness, appealed tremendously as characteristics to be emulated.

16 (*opposite*). 'Ramagari Ragini: a lady handing a garland to another as a sign of welcome'. Folio from a *ragamala* series. Sirohi, Rajasthan, 1680. Opaque watercolour on paper, 20.7 x 16 cm. British Museum.

Iconographies of *ragamalas* from the small state of Sirohi in southern Rajasthan deviate from standard representations used in other Rajasthani states. Rulers of Sirohi commissioned a large number of *ragamala* series for a few decades towards the end of the seventeenth century.

17. 'Life in exile on Mount Chitrakuta'. Folio 111 from the *Ayodhyakanda* (Volume 2) of the Jagat Singh *Ramayana*. Udaipur, Mewar, Rajasthan, 1650. Opaque watercolour on paper, 21 x 38.5 cm. British Library.

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, exiled from Ayodhya, build a hut and reside on Mount Chitrakuta, near the hermitage of the sage Valmiki.

Paintings of important deities and cult figures, such as Srinathji – another form of Krishna housed at Nathdvara in Rajasthan – or Devi as the supreme tantric goddess,[9] also formed an important genre in Rajput painting. The legend of Srinathji (meaning the husband of Sri, the goddess of wealth), illustrated in fig. 18, concerns a stone stela of Krishna at the age of seven, with

his left hand raised above his head in the act of lifting Mount Govardhana and his right hand resting on his waist. According to the legend, the saint Vallabhacharya, founder of the Pushti Marg sect, met a young boy at Mount Govardhana, who revealed himself as an incarnation of Krishna and asked that the Srinathji image be installed in a temple. The threat that the Mughal

18. 'The legend of Srinathji'. Nathdvara, Rajasthan, 1810. Opaque watercolour on paper, 22 x 30.3 cm. British Museum.

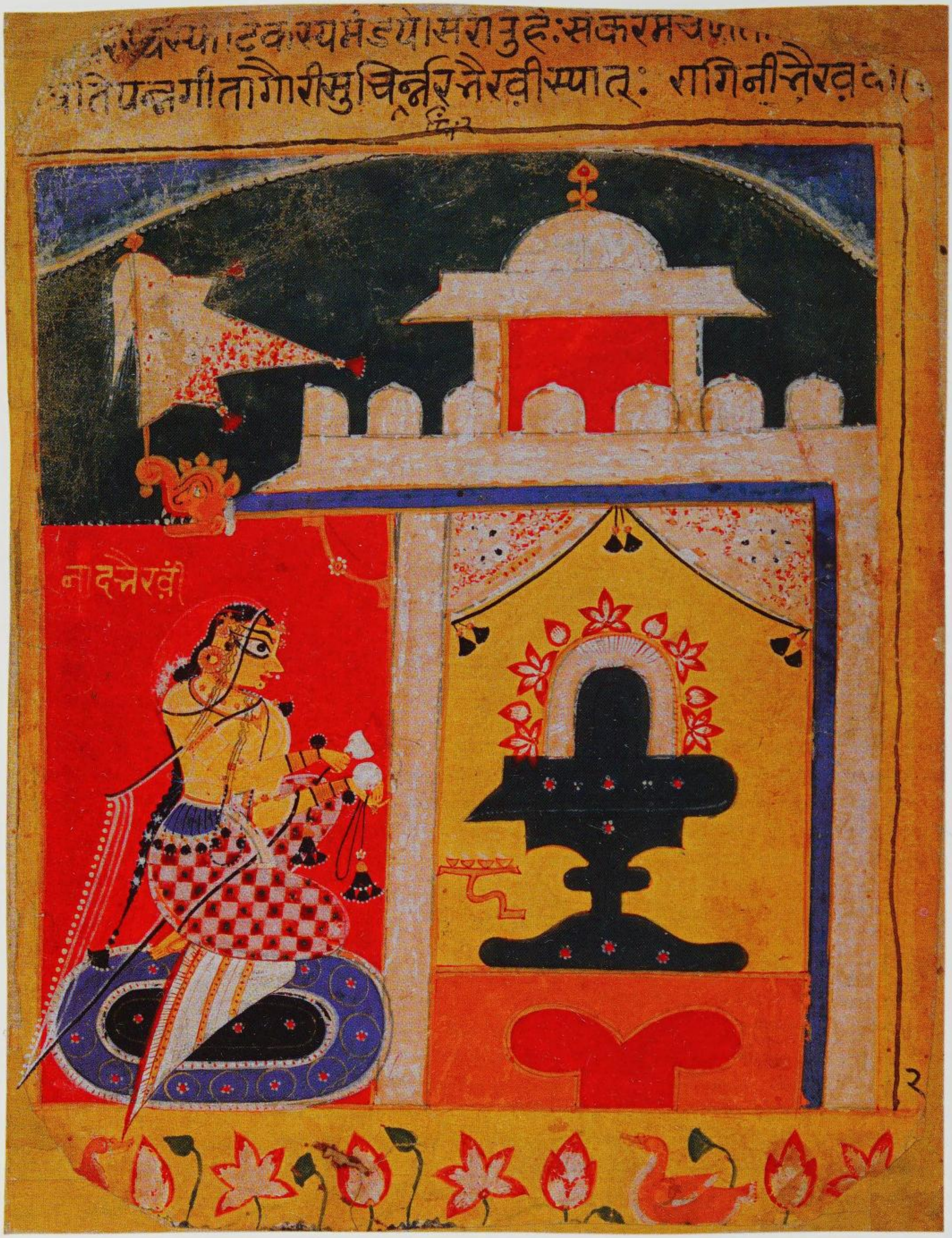
Vallabhacharya, founder of a sect of Vaishnavism, has a vision of Krishna as a child while on a pilgrimage to Mount Govardhana. He is instructed by the child deity to build a shrine to house an image of Srinathji (a stone stela of Krishna holding Mount Govardhana). Vallabhacharya and Krishna (both with haloes), the cow feeding the child deity, village folk and Vallabhacharya's followers, dressed in white, are all depicted as part of the legend.

emperor Aurangzeb's orthodox religiosity would cause the destruction of the sacred stela was the impetus to move it to safety. In 1670 the stela was to be smuggled out of Govardhana, concealed in a bullock cart, which got stuck in mud near Udaipur. This was taken as a sign that the lord wished to remain there, so a temple was built and the town was renamed Nathdvara. It is the main place of pilgrimage for followers of the Vallabhacharya sect of the Pushti Marg.[10]

Portraiture as an art was practically non-existent in India before the arrival of the Mughals. To capture the true likeness of a person was unimportant in a world filled with legends and the timeless universe of gods and goddesses. Early Indian sculptures of kings were few and far between and did not bear any resemblance to the persons concerned; rather they followed prescribed norms stated in iconographical texts. Characteristics such as the chest of a lion, eyebrows like the wings of a dove, long arms reaching the knees (a sign of a great man) and other iconographical attributes were adhered to, making portraits idealized rather than naturalistic. Mughal portraiture began during the reign of the emperor Humayun (r. 1530–56). Akbar developed the genre

into the hallmark of Mughal painting by commissioning portraits of his favourite protégés, allies and powerful personalities of the time, which were stored in *muraqqas* or albums for historical reference. Hindu courts close to their Mughal overlords began to emulate their painting styles, tastes and subject matter and commissioned royal portraits, perhaps as a means of self-aggrandizement and to increase the importance of their state. Amber and Bikaner were among the first to do so, closely followed by Marwar and Kishangarh. Mewar, being the last to surrender, adopted portraiture in the third quarter of the seventeenth century, and a prolific number of court portraits exist of maharanas (or maharajas), depicted in impassive profile enjoying the many festivities or rituals of Hindu court life or participating in a royal hunt. Royal portraits also proved popular in the Himalayan region and were commissioned by rulers who had experienced Mughal courtly culture.

And yet the majority of Rajput portraits can be distinguished easily from Mughal ones. The Indian artist would strive to imbue the portrait of a Rajput ruler with heroic traits (*veer rasa*) – as a warrior, seated on a rearing mount, with a proud straight back and a flamboyant moustache (see for example fig. 74) – rather than try and capture his physiognomy. Or the ruler would be depicted larger than life, grandly seated on a carpet, surrounded by lesser attendants on a hierarchical scale and smoking a hookah, the privilege of royalty. Such a portrait may reflect some individual physical attributes but would hardly be a true likeness of the person concerned. Comparing our frontispiece, a portrait of Thakur Hari Singh of Chandawal, with the portrait of Jahangir and sons (fig. 3) serves to illustrate the differences between Rajput and Mughal portraiture. The former emphasizes the chieftain enjoying the privilege of imbibing from a hookah and displays a brilliant range of colour and decorative elements rather than stressing the subject's personality or individuality; the latter, however, focuses on the psychological penetration of individual characteristics to provide a portrait of Jahangir and his sons that is immediately recognizable, using a technique of capturing likenesses which Mughal court artists strove to master.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CHAPTER THREE

Early Rajput Painting

BHAIRAVI RAGINI (fig. 19), the lone survivor of the earliest known Rajput *ragamala* series, epitomizes the Early Rajput style of painting.[1] This robust precursor derives from a number of sources: indigenous folk art, the great Indian mural tradition, Jain illustrated manuscripts and Sultanate paintings all played a part in the development of the Early Rajput aesthetic. The *rasa* theory determined factors such as colour and symbolism, and ancient Indian texts such as the *Sadanga* and the *Citrasutra* of the *Visnudharmottarapurana*, describing the methodology of painting, also contributed to its formulation.[2] These painting manuals detailed correct procedures for the representation and proportion of figures and settings, techniques of foreshortening and shading, and preparation for murals painted on the floors, walls and ceilings of houses, temples and palaces.[3]

Early mural painting, exemplified by the Buddhist cave paintings at Ajanta, Bagh (both given dates by scholars ranging from the first century BC to the fifth century AD) and Badami (sixth century), was characterized by a naturalistic, well-modelled fluency. This three-dimensional idiom gradually gave way to a taut, linear style of painting called Western Indian (twelfth to fifteenth centuries), used to illustrate Jain religious manuscripts, and to the refined, jewel-like Pala style in the east (eleventh to twelfth centuries), used in the illustration of Buddhist manuscripts. The change from well-modelled sculptural forms to a flatter, crisper look did not happen suddenly: hints of this development may be seen in sporadic examples on the subcontinent, for example in the wall paintings at Ellora (eighth century) and the remarkable mural paintings at the Alchi monastery (eleventh century) in the Himalayan region. These instances exhibit a linearity of figural form, with an eye that projects out of the human face, a distorted cliché also used in Jain manuscript painting.[4]

Early Hindu manuscripts were rare, as the Hindu tradition was overwhelmingly oral owing to the sanctity of sound. The mural tradition and the building of grand temples to house deities were the main Hindu artistic expressions until the Islamic invasions, when the rulers of the various principalities of the Delhi Sultanate (twelfth to fifteenth centuries) patronized the art of the book and stimulated a change in Hindu artistic ideas. Sound, however, was not of such fundamental importance to Buddhist and Jain philosophies,

19 (*opposite*). 'Bhairavi Ragini'. Folio from a *ragamala* series. Possibly Mewar, Rajasthan, 1550. Opaque watercolour on paper, 21.2 x 16.4 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum.

'Out in a lake, in a shrine of crystal, she worships Shiva with songs punctuated by the beat, the fair one, the bright one, that is *Narada Bhairavi*.'
K. Ebeling, *Ragamala Painting*, p. 118.

20. 'The fourteen auspicious dreams of the *jina*'s mother'. Folio 2 recto from a *Kalpasutra* manuscript. Western Indian style, Gujarat, 1445. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper. British Library.

Queen Trishala dreams fourteen auspicious dreams before the birth of Mahavira, one of the twenty-four *tirthankaras* (revered saints) of Jainism.

and their canons were spread by the written word. Laymen commissioned Jain and Buddhist manuscripts as a means of gaining spiritual merit and donated copies to Jain temple libraries or Buddhist monasteries.

The earliest Jain manuscripts were painted on palm leaves before the fashion of painting on paper took over some time in the mid-fourteenth century. Jain manuscript painting practised in Gujarat, Jaunpur, Mandu and Rajasthan was in the archaic Western Indian style, of which fig. 20, a folio from the Jain text of the *Kalpasutra*, or the Life of Mahavira, is an example. The round head of the mother of the *jina* (conqueror of desire), which is disproportionately larger than her body, the angularity of her facial features depicted in profile with the incongruous eye bulging out of her face, the sharp edges of costume and veil, the unrealistic spatial depiction of the auspicious signs she sees in the dreams floating above her head, and the plain monochrome red background are all part of the stylized convention of Jain manuscript illustration, a conceptual tradition preserved in a virtually unchanged state for over four hundred years from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. This convention was not meant to be a realistic depiction of a person in time and space. The Jain religious world view, represented by the worship of the twenty-four *jinas* or *tirthankaras*, enlightened saintly beings, and their scripture, was codified by artists into pictorial precepts meant to convey the potency of this scripture.

Some early Hindu manuscripts, such as the *Balagopalastuti* (hymns of praise of the youthful Krishna) depicted in fig. 21,[5] were also painted in the fossilized Western Indian form. The iconography of Vishnu holding the conch and discus is superimposed onto the four-armed Krishna (Vishnu's incarnation), and the offering of milk and curd to Krishna by the *gopis*, a ritual that is still practised today, is the artist's subject. Over time such formulas became conventional stock expressions, but the interrelationship of Krishna and the *gopis* and the movement conveyed in fig. 21, with gestures more naturally described,

are a departure from the static iconography of Jain manuscript illustrations. A cloth scroll of the *Vasanta Vilasa* in the Freer Gallery, Washington (1451), is painted in a similar Western Indian idiom but adopts looser and fresher forms, as well as new compositions incorporating landscape and free-standing pavilions that anticipate compositions in Early Rajput painting.[6]

A late fifteenth-century painting on a pair of wooden board covers from Bihar appears to bridge the gap between Jain illustrations and the Early Rajput style.[7] The diminutive figures of Vishnu's incarnations (fig. 22) are more softly and naturalistically rendered and the Jain projecting eye has vanished. The seated position of Balarama, third from the left, with his dhoti falling in a stiff triangle between his legs, as well as the hand positions, or *mudras*, of all the figures, are stock representations of Early Rajput works. These simple, unsophisticated figures are extremely similar to the doll-like figures of the *Mahapurana*, dated 1540, from Palam, a manuscript in the Early Rajput style painted near Delhi. The discovery of these manuscript board covers serves to emphasize an important point in the history of Indian painting before the

21. Folio 21 recto from a *Balagopalastuti* manuscript. Gujarat, early fifteenth century. Opaque watercolour on paper, 10.5 x 23.1 cm. British Museum.

The *Balagopalastuti*, by the poet Bilvamangala, was conceived as a meditational hymn to Krishna as a youth.

22. Illustrated binding boards of a *Pingalatattvavyakhya* manuscript. Bihar, 1491–2. Opaque watercolour on wooden board. British Library.

Detail from the inside of the front wooden board cover, showing Parasurama, Rama, Balarama and Buddha.

advent of the Mughals: that variants of precursors to the Early Rajput style were being used not only in Rajasthan and central India but also in the distant east, in the areas of Bengal and Bihar, indeed in the entire northern belt of the subcontinent.[8]

The remains of the painted ceiling of a *chhatri* (domed pavilion) in the Man Mandir palace at Gwalior (1500–15) is an example of the mural tradition that may have influenced the Early Rajput style. Vestiges of arabesque designs, peacocks and dancing girls reflecting the Hindu–Muslim cultural coalescence of that state appear to be stylistic precedents of Rajput paintings on paper.[9]

Sultanate paintings from Delhi, Malwa, Jaunpur, Gujarat, Bengal and the Deccan (fourteenth to fifteenth centuries) also had a direct bearing on the patronage and style of Early Rajput painting. Illuminated copies of the Koran and illustrated tales of Islamic heroes such as Hamza and Sinbad were at first commissioned in the Persian manner. A gradual cultural synthesis between Islamic rulers and Indian subjects took place, resulting in an amalgam of artistic styles and ideas. A new approach to painting figures, animals, plants and architecture was adopted from the Persian tradition. Cross-cultural currents led to Islamic artistic elements, such as the dome and the arabesque scroll design, being incorporated into later Jain painting and Early Rajput works, and to Sultanate manuscripts absorbing indigenous stylistic elements. As Ananda Krishna has pointed out, an important factor leading to stylistic cross-fertilization is the fact that painters migrated from one centre to another.[10] A folio from the *Ni'matnama* (fig. 23) – a cookbook commissioned by Ghiyas Shah Khilji (r. 1469–1500), Sultan of Mandu in Malwa – features female figures clad in Indian costume and jewellery, which anticipate the figure of Bhairavi Ragini in fig. 19. The lush vegetation in the background is an innovative feature not seen in earlier Jain illustrations. The *Ni'matnama* is predominantly in the Turkman style from Shiraz in Persia, a refined idiom copied by Indian artists, who at times give away their indigenous training by including Indian ladies next to ladies in Persian costume, or other elements such as textile patterns in the Jain tradition, local architectural forms and an Indian mango tree.[11] Distinctly Indian-looking bullocks and a banyan tree in a Sultanate painting from the *Miftah ul-Fuzula* (1500–10) are also distinguishing features of Early Rajput painting.[12]

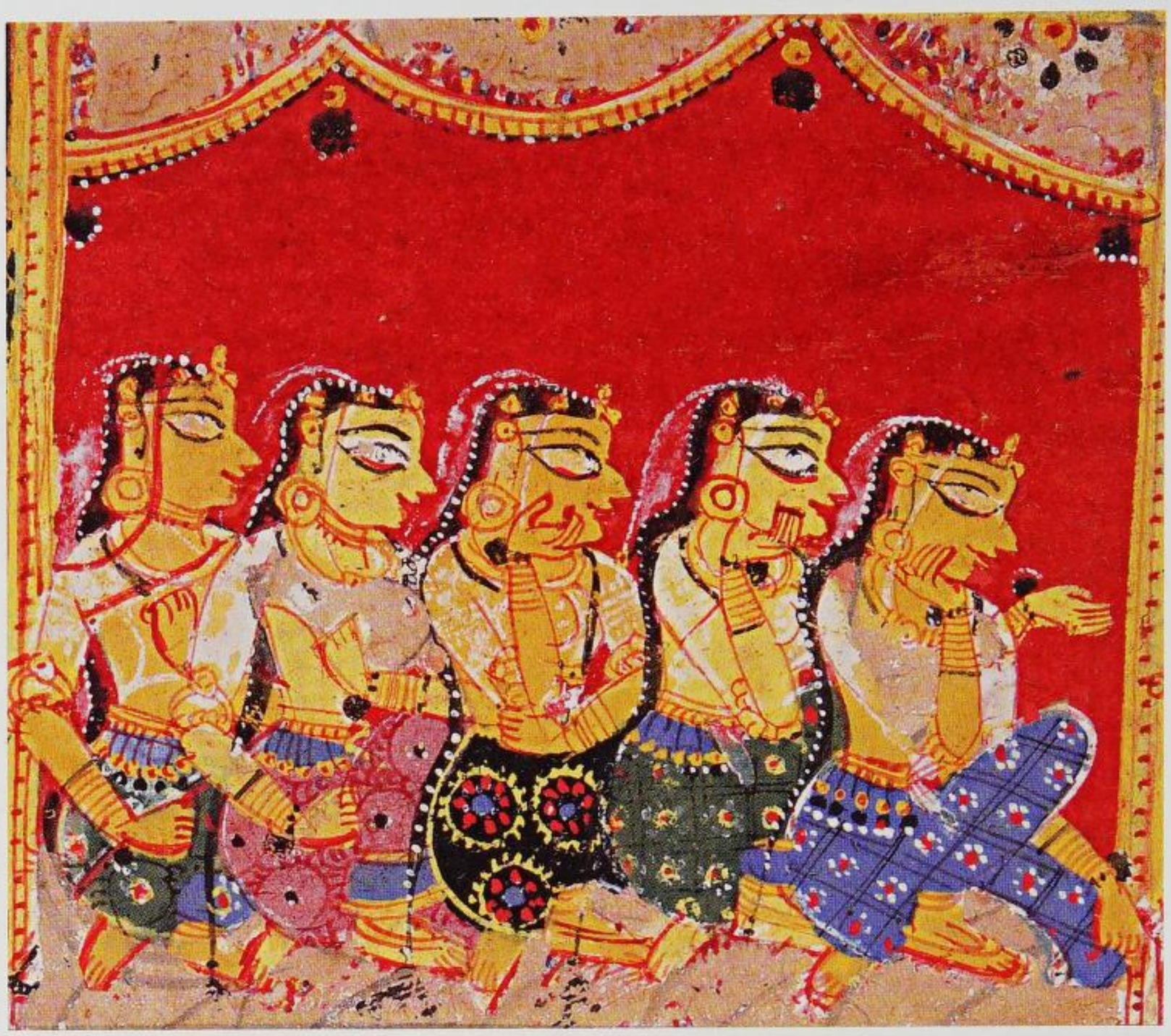
Various illustrated manuscripts of the sixteenth century have similar stylistic traits, including an *Aranyaka Parvan* of 1516, a *Mahapurana* dated 1540, a *Bhagavata Purana* (1520–30), the painting of Bhairavi Ragini (1550; fig. 19), the *Chaurapanchasika* (1550), a *Laur Chanda* manuscript (1550), a *Gitagovinda* manuscript (1550–60), and the *Issarda Bhagavata Purana* (1560–65). They are part of what is called the '*Chaurapanchasika* group', a core set that represents the classic phase of the Early Rajput style of painting. The *Aranyaka Parvan* (part of the *Mahabharata* epic) dated 1516, the earliest of the group, is painted in a simplified folk-like idiom that is closest to the Western Indian style. It is rather unsophisticated compared with later figures of the *Laur Chanda* or

Chaurapanchasika, but it is extremely similar to paintings in the Pahari *Devi Mahatmya* from the hill region (see fig. 76).[13] The inscribed *Devi Mahatmya* is the single most important document from the hill region, as it predates other Pahari paintings from Basohli in the classical idiom by a century and provides evidence of artistic communication between the plains and the hills and the influence of the far-reaching Early Rajput style.

The *Mahapurana* dated 1540 and the *Bhagavata Purana* ascribed a date of 1520–30 show an assured line and are better articulated than the earlier *Aranyaka Parvan*; they represent variants of the well-formed stage of the Early Rajput style. One folio from the *Bhagavata Purana* (fig. 1) is in two horizontal

23. 'Soft food being prepared'. Folio 136b from the *Ni'matnama*. 1500. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper. British Library.

The *Ni'matnama*, a recipe book prepared for the ruler of Mandu, has fifty illustrations depicting the preparation of various delicacies.



Detail of fig. 1, 'The wedding of Aniruddha and Rocana', from a *Bhagavata Purana* manuscript of 1525–30.

registers depicting different time zones. The curvaceous wide-eyed female figures with small waists and flared hips (see detail above) and the textile designs of their skirts are a dynamic evolution of Queen Trishala's stylized form in fig. 20.[14] The square-faced men with large chests, small waists and *kulahdar* turbans (a feature of the *Chaurapanchasika* group) are similar to male figures in Sultanate paintings, as are the architectural pavilion with two Islamic domes and the scrolling design on which figures in the lower register are seated.[15] The blocks of red, green and black background colours and the wavy sky seen towards the left are components of Jain painting. Swathes of fabric hanging from eaves with black tassels in between and rows of tassels emulating auspicious flower garlands hanging from doorways are all features of the Early Rajput style seen in other paintings of the *Chaurapanchasika* group. The caption in Nagari script on the folio provides an identification of the main event in the narrative being depicted. The original compositions of the *Bhagavata*, the interplay of characters and the innovative device of continuous narration, in which protagonists are depicted more than once in time and space on the same folio, are the beginnings of the great narrative tradition in Rajput painting that can be seen later in more sophisticated forms. It is clear that these conventions were established earlier, probably in the mid- to late fifteenth century, but the location and beginnings of these early norms must remain speculative. Two great Rajput rulers of the mid-fifteenth century, Rana Kumbha of Mewar (r. 1433–68) and Raja Man Singh of Gwalior (r. 1486–

1517), both powerful figures of the time, lovers of music and the arts and supporters of courtly culture, provided the most likely patronage for the beginnings of Early Rajput painting.[16] The imaginative artists of the dynamic, action-packed series of over two hundred folios of the early *Bhagavata Purana* follow the norms of the *Citrasutra*, which encourages imaginative and rhythmic expression. Gestures and poses express *bhava* (emotional state or mood) and *rasa* (sentiment or flavour), crucial elements of Rajput painting.

The *Laur Chanda*, *Chaurapanchasika*, *Gitagovinda*, *Issarda Bhagavata Purana* and 'Bhairavi Ragini' folio complete the documented mature phase of paintings belonging to the *Chaurapanchasika* group. The robust painting of Bhairavi Ragini (fig. 19) worshipping the *linga* (Shiva's aniconic form), as she sings or chants a *mantra* while clashing her cymbals, represents the later or fully developed phase of the Early Rajput style. The words *Nad Bhairavi*, or 'singing Bhairavi', are inscribed in Nagari script next to her. Bhairavi's stiff-edged veil and exaggerated eye set in a square-shaped face, the chequerboard textile patterning on her skirt and the flat blocks of background primary colours are all derived from the Western Indian style. The clearly articulated architectural setting of the *linga*, housed in a shrine with what appears to be the rounded curvature of a hill in the background, expresses a naturalistic compositional setting in a vertical page format, an influence of Sultanate painting. The verse inscribed on the yellow margin at top, pertaining to her iconography, is a common formula used in later Mewar *ragamala* paintings. This and other stylistic affinities to the Chawand Ragamala (1605) from Mewar have further strengthened the assumption that some early manuscripts of the *Chaurapanchasika* group originate from Mewar.[17]

The emotional content of 'Bhairavi Ragini', the love for the divine symbolized by *sringara rasa*, is flamboyantly depicted by the sensuousness of the woman's body, the full-blown lotuses surrounding the *linga* and the tassels adorning the curtains and figure of Bhairavi. Her voluptuous body is not meant to be a realistic depiction of a female in time and space; rather it symbolizes love for the divine, as does the oversized *linga* surrounded by flowers inside a diminutive pavilion. The proportion of the pavilion in relation to the *linga* or figure of Bhairavi is unimportant, as is the unrealistic background of a hillock; both take secondary place to the *rasa* and energy with which the painting is charged. These dynamic early Rajput paintings with their colourful visual metaphors are resonant of the Hindu world view wherein artistic forms are intended as bold evocations of religious and emotional sentiments that bear no relation to spatial or temporal frameworks. The Early Rajput style developed into the different regional styles of Rajasthan, central India and the Pahari courts, and in turn influenced Mughal painting in the formative years of Akbar's atelier.

CHAPTER FOUR

Rajasthan

MEWAR

THE SESODIAS OF Mewar, acknowledged as foremost among all Rajput clans, claim legendary descent from Rama, hero of the epic *Ramayana* and progenitor of the *suryavamshi* (solar) race of Rajputs. The martial feats and exploits of Mewar's leaders Rana Kumbha (r. 1433–68), Rana Sanga (r. 1509–27) and Rana Pratap (r. 1572–97), as recited by their bards, proclaim Sesodia pride in their ancestral history. The fortress of Chitor, former capital of the Sesodia rulers, fell three times during its ravaged history: to a Sultanate ruler, Ala ud din Khilji, in 1303; to the Sultan of Gujarat in 1535; and finally to the Mughal imperial forces in 1567–8. Each time the glory of *jauhar* – a traditional rite that compelled all women to jump into the flames of a huge fire when it was known that their menfolk were defeated on the battlefield and their surrender was imminent – held sway. To endure this terrible fate, rather than submit to the enemy, embodies the indomitable spirit of Mewar. During Chitor's last siege, however, Rana Udai Singh II (r. 1536–72) prudently fled from the fortress and established the city of Udaipur on Lake Pichola, which thenceforth became Mewar's capital. His offspring continued their lone defiance of Akbar, for by now all the other rulers of Rajasthan had acknowledged his supremacy. Mewar's undulating terrain and hilly country, east of the Aravalli hills, suited their guerrilla warfare tactics against the Mughals throughout Akbar's reign.

During his interminable battles with the Mughals, Maharana Amar Singh I (r. 1597–1620) was forced to abandon Udaipur for a while and lived at Chawand, where the first known paintings from Mewar, an inscribed *ragamala* series dated 1605, were painted by an artist called Nasir ud din. It is clear that the style of the Chawand Ragamala (fig. 24) is a continuation of the Early Rajput style in its final stages of petrifaction, before artists were exposed to Mughal painting and inevitable changes took place. The square-shaped heads, black tassels on female costumes and drapery, bold primary colours, Sultanate domes and a high horizon are some of the features discernible in fig. 24 that may be compared with 'Bhairavi Ragini' (fig. 19) in the Early Rajput style. The stark 'fish eye' of Bhairavi, however, has given way to a milder form, and the

24. 'Sorathi Ragini: a lady offers betelnut to her lover'. Folio from the Chawand Ragamala, by Nasir ud din. Chawand, Mewar, Rajasthan, 1605. Opaque watercolour on paper, 14.8 x 14.5 cm. British Museum.

primitive boldness of the earlier illustration is now slightly subdued. The relationship of figures to architecture is better described than that demonstrated in fig. 19, and a tree peeping over the courtyard wall, a window and sconces holding vases are additions to the earlier basic format.

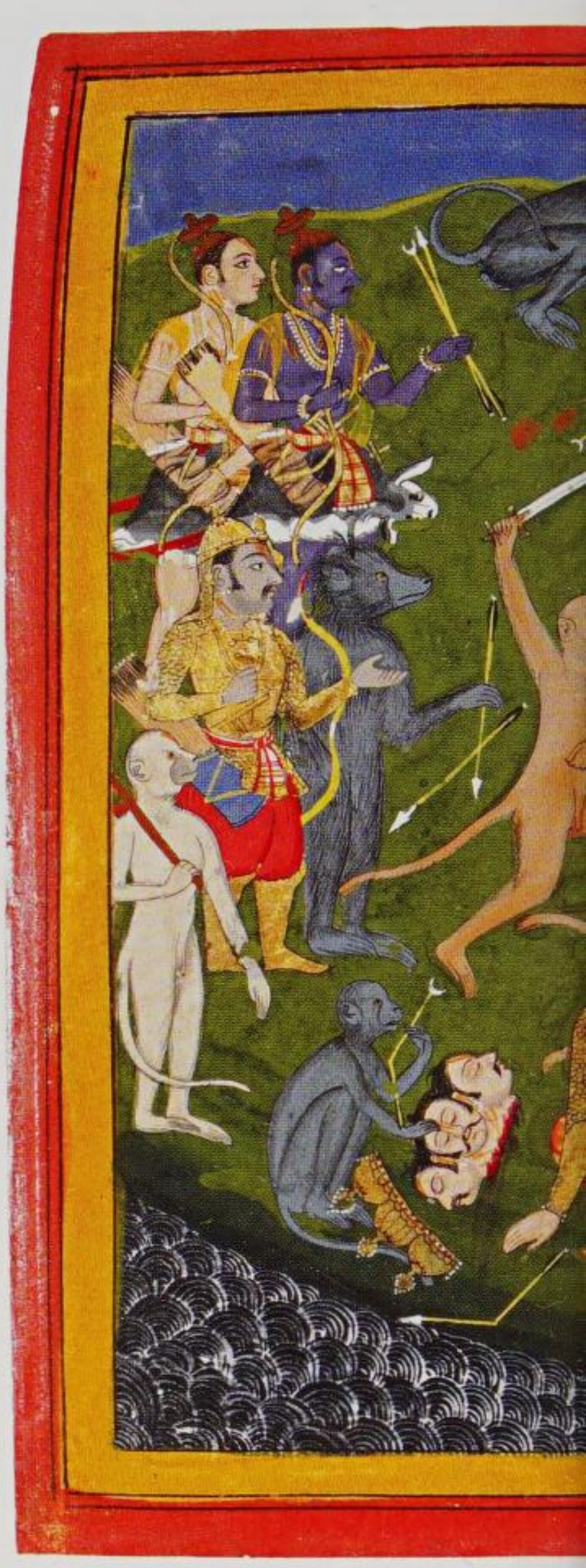
Amar Singh I was finally forced to surrender to Jahangir in 1615 but was spared the ignominy of the maharanas' required attendance at the Mughal court (Prince Karan Singh attended instead) and the obligation to provide princesses for the imperial harem, requirements with which all the other Rajput states except Bundi had been made to comply. The peace that prevailed encouraged a blossoming of art and architecture under the reigns of Maharana Karan Singh II (r. 1620–28) and Maharana Jagat Singh I (r. 1628–52).

Jagat Singh I, a connoisseur of painting and architecture, was one of Mewar's greatest patrons, and his reign is known as the golden age of Udaipur, when the arts received new impetus and were invigorated by contact with the grandeur of the Mughal empire. Apart from building the Jagmandir palace and the Jagadisha temple dedicated to Vishnu, Jagat Singh I commissioned a vast number of manuscripts in the Hindu classical tradition. His principal artist, Sahibdin, probably descended from Nasir ud din, creator of the landmark Chawand Ragamala, was an innovative and talented painter who formulated the early Mewar style.

'Radha addressing a friend' (fig. 25) by Sahibdin, an illustration to the *Gitagovinda*, depicts the *rasalila* dance of Krishna, a dance that each *gopi* willingly undertakes with the godhead in the forests of Vraja, a metaphor for the dance of god in the heart of man.[1] The *rasalila* dance, in which Krishna multiplies himself so that each *gopi* thinks that she alone is dancing with her beloved, evokes not only the erotic mood of the *Gitagovinda* but the spiritual mood as well. The *rasalila* holds great significance in the theology of the Vallabhacharya cult of Vaishnavism in Rajasthan. Sahibdin's symbolic composition, resonant with the poignancy of the poem, is evocative of the sentiment of *sringara rasa*. Figures derived from the popular Mughal idiom, a simplified version of the imperial Mughal style, painted by artists who had received some training in a Mughal studio, suggest Sahibdin's exposure to paintings in this style.[2] The bright, hot palette of fig. 25 is similar to that of the Chawand series, as are architectural and landscape elements in other paintings from this *Gitagovinda* series. Sahibdin's artistic sensibilities, therefore, remain firmly rooted in the tradition of his forebears exemplified by the Chawand

25 (*opposite*). 'Radha addressing a friend'. Folio from a *Gitagovinda* series by Sahibdin. Udaipur, Mewar, Rajasthan, 1635. Opaque watercolour on paper, 23.7 x 17.3 cm. British Museum.

'Radha addresses a companion and laments her separation from Krishna, while also stating her faith in him. Krishna is described with a peacock-feather crown, dressed in his conventional garb, playing the flute and dancing with a circle of *gopis*.' Inscription translated by Rupert Snell.



Ragamala. His spatial organization, however, is better articulated than that of his predecessors and the softer lines of popular Mughal figures lend a measure of refinement, a toning-down of the primitive starkness found in the Chawand series.

Jagat Singh I commissioned a vast *Ramayana* with seven volumes and over 450 illustrations, the size and scope of which was an extremely ambitious undertaking for a Rajput patron of the seventeenth century.[3] A change in style and technique was necessary in order to formulate imagery to reflect the narrative of Valmiki's text; and Sahibdin admirably accomplishes this in two volumes illustrated by him. A mode of continuous narration was developed from the early *Bhagavata Purana* (fig. 1). 'Life in exile at Mount Chitrakuta' (fig. 17), from the book of *Ayodhya*, the second volume of the *Ramayana* (completed 1650), depicts Rama and Sita five times in the same folio in temporal and spatial succession: eating a meal in the foreground; aiming at birds with a bow and arrow; climbing Mount Chitrakuta where they rest and have a conversation; Sita clinging to Rama when she sees a wild beast; and beginning their descent to visit an *ashrama* of sages. The focus is on detailed narrative, fuelling the desire to turn the page and 'read' the next illustration.[4] Another important compositional strategy, probably borrowed from Mughal painting, was the change in perspective to a bird's-eye, high-vantage viewpoint, compared with the horizontal viewpoint of Sahibdin's previous poetical and literary illustrations. By opening up the page in this way, Sahibdin was able to incorporate a great deal of detailed visual imagery, creating a conceptual view of the narrative rather than a Mughal-inspired empirical view. 'Life in exile at Mount Chitrakuta' (fig. 17), with its variegated hues of bright orange and its green trees contrasting with subdued grey rocks and hot yellow huts, conjures up an image of a magical land in which the heroes and heroine of the *Ramayana* chose to live. Landscape has been used symbolically to suggest the sanctity of the *Ramayana*

as sacred scripture and to depict an ethereal world in which Rama, incarnation of Vishnu, plays out his *lila* on earth.

Illustrations from the *Yuddhakanda*, the book of battles, from the Jagat Singh *Ramayana* (completed 1652), represent the pinnacle of Sahibdin's career: every folio was entrusted to his personal care, confirmed by an inscription in the colophon. 'The rout of the titan army' (fig. 26), depicting Ravana's army battling Rama's army of monkeys and bears, is reminiscent of Akbar's mammoth *Hamzanama* (1562–77), in which scenes of action and adventure dominate, but it could be argued that fig. 26 is more dynamic than any illustration from the *Hamzanama*. The brilliant juxtaposition of bodies, weapons and animals in the mêlée of war is astonishing and testifies to Sahibdin's talents as a superb draughtsman. Many of the figures are shown two or three

26. 'The rout of the titan army', by Sahibdin. Folio 91 from the *Yuddhakanda* (Volume 6) of the Jagat Singh *Ramayana* manuscript. Udaipur, Mewar, Rajasthan, 1652. Opaque watercolour on paper, 23 x 39 cm. British Library.

The monkey hordes, loyal to Rama and his allies (depicted to the left), battle Ravana's army of titans.

Detail of fig. 26, 'The rout of the titan army', by Sahibdin.

times in a continuous narrative mode to add to the confusion of war. In other folios from this canto of the *Ramayana* the fortress of Lanka is depicted schematically from multiple high-vantage viewpoints, with Ravana and a plethora of titans crowding the interior, and Rama and his allies outside.[5] The continuous mode of narration was also used in the eighteenth century in large *tamasha* paintings (grand spectacles or scenes of daily court life) or hunt scenes invariably depicting the maharana among his attendants. Sahibdin was an exceptional artist who laid the foundation of the Mewar manuscript illustration style, which was emulated by succeeding generations of Mewari artists.

The orthodox Mewar maharanas preferred paintings from literature, poetry and mythology until the mid-seventeenth century. Portraiture began to be explored from around 1670 onwards, during the reign of Maharana Raj Singh (r. 1652–80). Literary manuscript illustrations continued to dominate Mewar's artistic realm throughout the seventeenth century; those painted in the last quarter of that century, however, were merely weakly rendered copies of

27. 'Maharana Sangram Singh II hunting crane at Nahar Magra'. Udaipur, Mewar, Rajasthan, 1715–20. Opaque watercolour on paper, 46.7 x 82.9 cm. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

Sahibdin's style. It was not until the turn of the century that the course of painting in this conservative kingdom underwent a change.

Maharana Amar Singh II (r. 1698–1710) was responsible for reviving the atelier and giving it a new direction. He commissioned a large number of portraits of himself: on horseback, attended by ladies in gardens, in procession, relaxing on a swing, praying to the gods, in various hunt scenes and playing *holi* (a spring festival accompanied by the joyous throwing of coloured powder at friends and relatives) with his courtiers.[6] His artists have captured the essence of his face and physique well and he is instantly recognizable in all these works. Many of the paintings are executed in a *nim qalam* technique borrowed from mid-Akbari-period painting, combining the monotones of drawing with passages of colour.[7] Excessive shading on the face and figure in some portraits commissioned during his reign imparts a peculiar blackened look.

The *nim qalam* and shading techniques were both abandoned by artists under Maharana Sangram Singh II (r. 1710–34), Amar Singh's son. There was instead an emphasis on portraits and large panoramic paintings featuring the maharana in various courtly activities, celebrating festivals or pursuing the royal sport of the hunt, generally accompanied by a vast number of attendants, courtiers or women from the harem. These large canvases exemplify the new Mewar trend and continue under the reigns of his successors, Maharana Jagat Singh II (r. 1734–51) and Maharana Ari Singh (r. 1761–73). 'Maharana Sangram Singh II hunting crane at Nahar Magra' (fig. 27), a splendid example

28. 'The penance of the sage Visvamitra'. Folio 173 from the *Balakanda* (volume I) of a *Ramayana* manuscript. Udaipur, Mewar, Rajasthan, 1712. Opaque watercolour on paper, 21.5 x 38 cm. British Library.

The great sage Visvamitra undertakes severe penance for a thousand years in order to become a *brahmarishi* (the greatest of sages). Indra, the Vedic king of the gods, sends a beautiful nymph to entice him, but Visvamitra does not succumb to her beauty; instead, he curses her, turning her into a rock.

of a chase painting, shows the maharana (identified by the nimbus around his head) on horseback in pursuit of crane at the Nahar Magra hunting ground, surrounded by his attendants. He is depicted several times in continuous succession. Figures, birds and landscape are shown in multiple viewpoints, a characteristic of paintings in this genre at Mewar. Brilliant artistic touches of the flying crane set amid a scene of panoramic magnificence, with undulating hills receding into space and a distant sunset, make this one of the finest paintings of the *tamasha* genre. Exposure to perspective in Mughal works probably initiated this new artistic trend.

Sangram Singh II also commissioned a large number of illustrated manuscripts, often with hundreds of paintings in each manuscript; a *Satsai* (seven hundred verses) by the poet Bihari Lal, for example, contains 643 pages and a *Balakanda*, the first book of a *Ramayana* manuscript, has 202 illustrations.[8] 'The penance of the sage Visvamitra' (fig. 28) is one of the most beautiful paintings in this *Ramayana* manuscript; the sage is sensitively shaded and

29. 'Portrait of a foreigner'. Udaipur, Mewar, Rajasthan, 1711–12. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 20.2 x 15 cm. British Museum.

delineated, as are the river and tree in the foreground. Figures are larger than those in manuscripts of the seventeenth century, the palette and line are both softer, and the high horizon and continuous narrative mode persist.

A curious painting of a foreigner in eighteenth-century costume with wig, hat and boots (fig. 29) represents a genre of Mewar paintings executed under Sangram Singh II, providing evidence of the first contingent of European ambassadors at the court of Udaipur. Johan Josua Ketelaar, head of the Dutch East India Company, visited Udaipur with his delegates in 1711, en route to the Mughal court, an event documented by three large paintings of Sangram Singh II receiving a group of Europeans at the Udaipur court.[9]

30. 'Maharana Sangram Singh with his wife and attendants'. Udaipur, Mewar, Rajasthan, 1725–30. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 32.2 x 20.2 cm. British Museum.

The inscription next to the figure in fig. 29 states that this is a portrait of a *farangi* (foreigner), perhaps a delegate in the visiting party. This theme recurs sporadically in Mewar painting until the nineteenth century and is sometimes rather amusingly or incongruously portrayed.

A portrait of Sangram Singh with his *rani* (queen) captures his character traits perfectly, though in a rather stiff manner; the figures of his *rani* and attendants, however, are mere female types (fig. 30). This continued to be the case in most Rajput portraiture, as women were always veiled, lived in the *zenana* wing of the palace and were seldom seen in public. The foliage in the foreground derives from contemporary Muhammad Shah-period works, as does the increasing use of white evident in the archway which holds the swing.

The quantity of illustrations produced during Jagat Singh II's reign did not diminish, despite the looming threat from the Marathas and persistent internal friction between Mewari clans. Indeed, Jagat Singh II may be compared with his contemporary, the ineffectual Mughal ruler Muhammad Shah, who happily continued courtly activities while turning a deaf ear to reports of external strife. This chaotic state of affairs led to an inevitable decline in Mewar painting under Jagat Singh II and his weak successor, Ari Singh.

31. 'Woman on a swing'. Udaipur, Mewar, Rajasthan, 1750. Opaque watercolour on paper, 29.5 x 19.5 cm. British Museum.

'Forbidden, she swings with double force, neither hesitant nor afraid; / Her waist nearly snaps and the tree creaks, but bends lithely and survives.'
Translation by Rupert Snell of the verse inscribed above the painting.

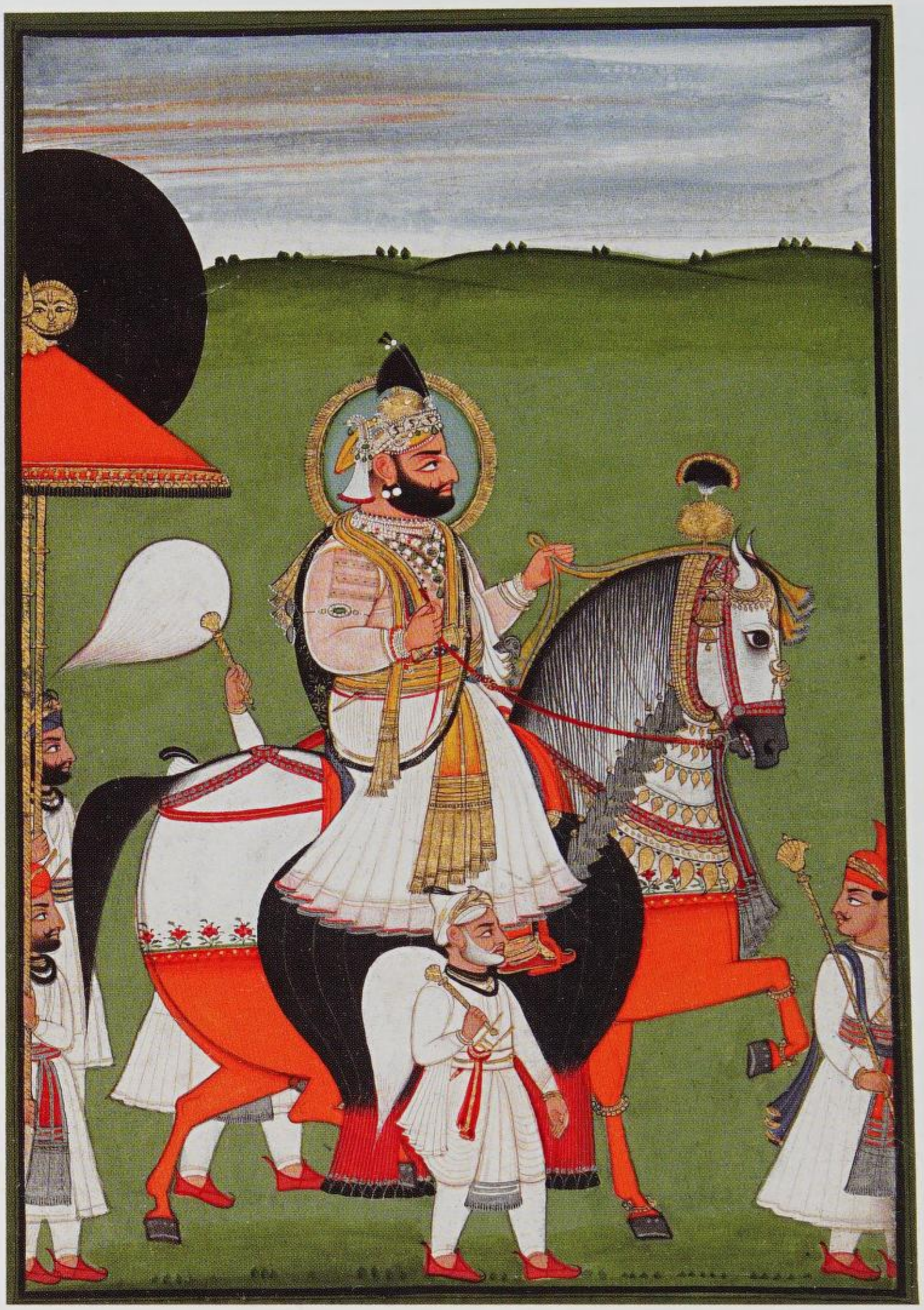
Fig. 31 depicts women enjoying a swing outdoors in the season of spring.[10] Figures have become excessively stylized, the landscape heavy and monotonous, the line has hardened and paint has been thickly applied. The trees, with their distinctive colourful leaf formation interspersed with the all-pervasive plantain, are in Sahibdin's style but are painted here in a ponderous fashion. Overall, the freshness and vitality of earlier Mewar works have vanished. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, however, an artist named Bakhta, who painted for a brief period at Udaipur, moved to the powerful fiefdom of Devgarh, ruled by the noble lineage of the Chundawat family, direct descendants of Rana Lakha of Udaipur. Bakhta and his son Chokha gave Mewar painting a new lease of life for almost half a century.

The *thikana* (fiefdom) of **Devgarh**, situated in the heart of the Aravalli hills between Udaipur and Ajmer, was ruled by one of the sixteen noble families closest to the maharanas of Mewar. Paintings from *thikanas* usually tended to emulate the style of their parent state, but this was not the case with those from Devgarh, which are some of the most brilliant eighteenth-

32 (*opposite*). 'Kunwar Ragho Dasji and sons worshipping Girdhariji', by Bakhta. Devgarh, Mewar, Rajasthan, 1770. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 25.7 x 33 cm. British Museum.

century paintings from Mewar. Early wall paintings in the Devgarh palace (dating from the first quarter of the eighteenth century) were probably executed by artists borrowed from the maharana's capital at Udaipur, as it is unlikely that this small fiefdom had the resources to maintain an ongoing artistic atelier. The artist Bakhta moved from Udaipur to Devgarh in 1767 to serve under Rawat Jaswant Singh: an early painting of Jaswant Singh's heir, Kunwar Ragho Dasji, and his sons (fig. 32) was executed by Bakhta at Devgarh. Ragho Dasji had commanded Devgarh's forces against Maharana Ari Singh, with the intention of installing the young Ratan Singh, Raj Singh's son, born after his father's death, on the Udaipur throne, and had turned the tide of the battle against Ari Singh, a glorious event in Devgarh's history. Fig. 32 shows Ragho Dasji and his sons worshipping Sri Girdhariji, a form of the famous Srinathji (Krishna) image at Nathdvara. Ragho Dasji is in yellow garb with his youngest sons on his lap. The large figure in red is his eldest son, Anop Singh, a larger-than-life figure supposedly almost seven feet (2.1 m) tall, who died in 1712, before he could succeed his father. The brightly coloured, turbaned figures against the lush green, patterned backdrop form a brilliant design of dazzling colour. The interest is in the surface design and bold portraiture. The portraits are rendered with sensitive perception of character, conveying the major traits of the persons depicted: Ragho Dasji's face is disfigured by smallpox scars, a true-to-life feature that Bakhta has the freedom to express. The excessive shading on jaw lines and faces accentuates the forthright presentation of the portraits. This painting by Bakhta at the Devgarh court radiates with an energy not seen in his earlier paintings for Ari Singh at the Udaipur court, which conform to contemporary artistic practices and standards. At Devgarh he shows his style at its vigorous best.[11]

Maharana Bhim Singh (r. 1778–1828) accepted British suzerainty in 1818, owing to ceaseless strife, the plundering activities of the Marathas and the



33. 'Maharana Jawan Singh'. Udaipur, Mewar, Rajasthan, 1830. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 19 x 13.2 cm. British Museum.

critical state of Mewar's economy. Painting under the debauched Marahana Jawan Singh (r. 1828–38) continued in a mediocre fashion, repeating old and worn out conventions (fig. 33). Painting in Mewar was by far the most conservative, predictable and consistent of all the Rajasthani schools; the traditional Mewar maharanas continued to patronize illustrations of the *tamasha* and portrait genres with scarcely a change in stylistic expression until well into the twentieth century.

BUNDI AND KOTAH

PAINTING AT Bundi and Kotah began at the end of the sixteenth century as a direct result of Bundi rulers' exposure to painting at the Mughal court, unlike the Mewar tradition, which appears to be a continuation of an earlier, indigenous style. The region's densely forested hills and steep gorges formed by the Chambal river and its tributaries are depicted in paintings of the hunt, a popular royal pastime in both states. Kotah's rulers, in particular, seem to have been passionate about the hunt, as testified by paintings of various princes practising the sport in the hunting grounds near Kotah fort.

The rulers of both kingdoms were related families of the Hara clan of the Chauhan dynasty. The Haras laid claim to a legendary descent from Agni, the god of fire, held sacred by Hindus since Vedic times (1500–500 BC). The state of Bundi, also known as Haravati (after the Haras), was founded by Rao Deva of the Chauhan dynasty around 1341 after defeating the original Mina tribals of the south-eastern region of Rajasthan. Kotah was added to Bundi territory later, after the Bhil tribals of Kotah were overcome, and remained part of Bundi territory until 1631, when it was granted its independence by Mughal imperial decree. During its history Bundi had become a vassal of its larger neighbour Mewar; allegiance to Mewar was both political and matrimonial as Mewar and Bundi royals intermarried, and Bundi rulers, titled 'Rao' or 'Maharao', fought alongside the Mewar maharanas in defiance of the Mughals early in Akbar's reign. The surrender of the strategic cliff-top fort of Ranthambhor to Akbar in 1569, however, forced Rao Surjan Singh (r. 1554–85) of Bundi to accept Mughal suzerainty. Ranthambhor was an important fort that had been difficult to conquer, and the jubilant Akbar magnanimously exempted the Bundi rulers from the onerous practice of providing their female relatives in marriage to him. The Haras were envied by other Rajput clans for this privilege, for caste was sacred to the Hindu and marrying out of caste was considered a pollution of their blood. Successive Bundi rulers now served as officers in Mughal armies and fought for their overlords against Maharana Amar Singh of Mewar, in Kangra and in the Deccan.

The history of Bundi painting begins with the Chunar Ragamala (inscribed and dated 1591), so called because it was painted in the district of Chunar. Chunar was part of the Mughal empire and Rao Surjan Singh of Bundi was its governor. His son Rao Bhoj Singh (r. 1585–1607) is the possible patron of this *ragamala* series, even though he did not actually live in Chunar but in nearby Varanasi. This patronage has long since been assumed by scholars, as the style, iconography and imagery of later Bundi *ragamalas* are derived from their Chunar prototypes. The Chunar Ragamala bears some resemblance to a *Tutinama* manuscript (1580) commissioned by Akbar, and a sub-imperial *Ramayana* manuscript (1589–98) commissioned by Abd al-Rahim Khan-Khanan

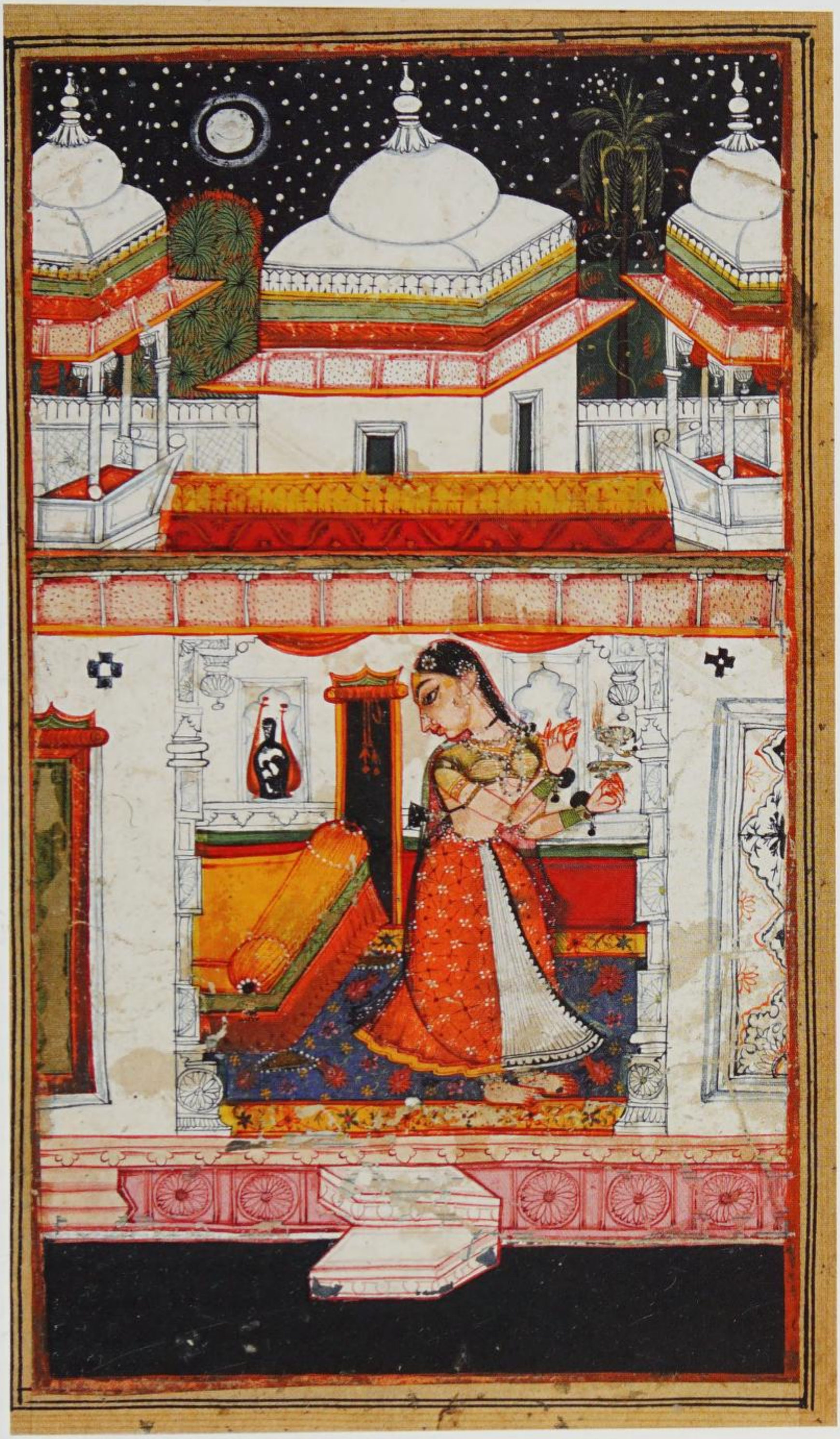
(commander-in-chief of the Mughal army).[12] This is not surprising as the inscription in the *ragamala* states that its artists, Shaikhs Husain, ʿAli and Hatim, were pupils of two famous masters in Akbar's atelier.[13] The Chunar series therefore exemplifies the sub-imperial Mughal style of painting, defined as the dissemination of the Mughal style through artists who had received some training in the imperial studio and were subsequently employed by Mughal nobility or Rajput royalty.[14] The sophistication of this series, with well-modelled figures and lush forested landscape teeming with flora and fauna, contrasts with paintings from the 1605 Chawand Ragamala from Mewar, which derived from indigenous painting (see fig. 24). While acquiring their painting style from their Islamic masters' studios, Bundi rulers still chose predominantly Hindu literary and mythological themes, evidence of their inherent conservatism.

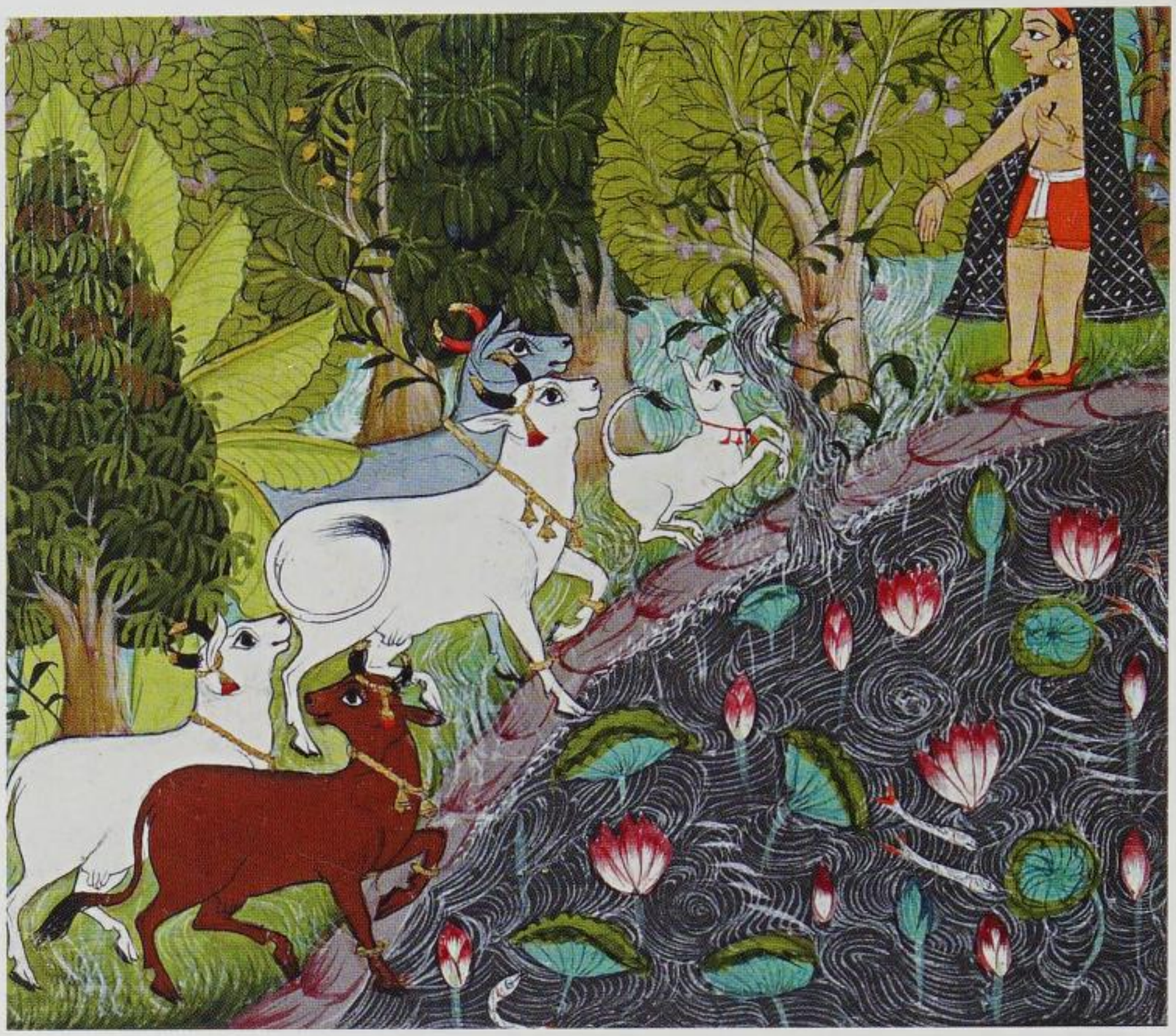
It is not known whether a painting atelier existed in Bundi during Rao Bhoj's reign but his successor, Rao Ratan Singh (r. 1607–31), commissioned the frescoes at the Baddal Mahal in Bundi, which are in a popular Mughal style. Certain Rajput features such as the ubiquitous plantain tree, used so enthusiastically by Sahibdin in Mewar, can be seen in these palace frescos. Rao Ratan proved his capabilities as a warrior and commander of Mughal forces in Burhanpur, the Mughal outpost in the Deccan and received honours and a higher rank from Jahangir. A large *Bhagavata* series of 1640, called the Kotah Museum *Bhagavata* after its current location, may have been commissioned by either of the two royal brothers Rao Shatru Sal (r. 1631–58) of Bundi or Rao Madho Singh (r. 1631–48) of Kotah, for after Rao Ratan's demise in 1631 Kotah became a separate state. This series, like the Chunar set, was influenced by sub-imperial painting and, in turn, has influenced the styles of both Bundi and Kotah manuscript painting.[15]

Bundi painting acquired its definitive and recognizable character during the reign of Rao Bhao Singh (r. 1658–81). Rao Bhao was a keen patron of painting and had a flourishing atelier, apparent in various new genre scenes of ladies and princes in gardens; he also commissioned a number of *ragamala* series. The iconography of Gaund Ragini is that of a lady scattering lotus petals in her bedchamber in anticipation of her lover's arrival (fig. 34). This unusual *ragini* is found exclusively in Bundi *ragamala* series as a wife of Megha Raga. The imagery follows that of Gaund Ragini from the Chunar series.[16] The Mughalized elements of the Chunar style, however, have been replaced

34 (*opposite*). 'Gaund Ragini: a lady scattering lotus petals in her bedchamber'. Folio from a *ragamala* series. Bundi, Rajasthan, 1660. Opaque watercolour on paper. 22.8 x 13 cm. British Museum.

'Tormented with love, preparing a couch of soft flowers, and watching the path of the beloved. A female messenger casting in the night her glances here and there, this dark complexioned one is well known as Gormallar or Gaund *Ragini*.'
K. Ebeling, *Ragamala Painting*, p. 124.





35 (*opposite and detail right*). 'The month of *Sravana* (July/August)'. Folio from a *baramasa* series. Bundi, Rajasthan, 1680–1700. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 25.7 x 16.5 cm. British Museum.

'The poet Keshavdas says that during the month of Sravana the rivers meet the sea making a pleasant scene. Creepers fresh after the rains cling to trees. There are lightning streaks in the sky and peacocks cry out happily. All lovers meet their beloveds in the month of Sravana. In this month one should not even think of venturing outdoors.'
V.P. Dwivedi, *Barahmasa: The Song of Seasons in Literature and Art*, p. 133.

by a thicker line; similarities, such as the diagonal lines used in the domes to impart volume, a starry black sky and the well-modelled form of the lady, are all coarser copies of their Chunar prototypes. The elongated head of Gaund Ragini is disproportionately larger than her body, and the bulbous cheeks and 'fish eye', as well as the amateurish drawing of the steps leading down from the chamber, indicate the hand of an inexperienced apprentice. Fig. 34 is, therefore, a cruder variant of the standard Bundi style of this period.[17]

The first fifty years of the seventeenth century were a period of consolidation and artistic renewal for the Mughals and their vassals, the Rajput princes, who had secured the power and prestige commensurate with ruling one of the largest empires ever to exist on the Indian subcontinent; and Bundi was no exception. While Aurangzeb forbade the building of Hindu temples and any practising of the arts from 1668 until his death in 1707, Rajput rulers did not curtail their patronage of courtly paintings. The Bundi style evolved into a mature phase by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries during the reigns of the successive rulers Rao Anurad Singh (r. 1681–95) and Rao Raja Budh Singh (r. 1695–1739). Lyrical and luxuriant landscapes, animated figures and brilliant colours were the hallmarks of this period. Lush foliage with hidden peacocks and a black sky with swirls of grey thunderclouds and golden curls of lightning, heralding the advent of the rains in northern India, form an exuberant backdrop to a painting from a *baramasa* series (fig. 35).[18] Radha and Krishna are seated on the open terrace of a house

॥ अथ सावन ॥ केसव सजिता सक जामि जित सागर मन मोहै जलित लता जपटाति तरु नत नत रव
रसो है चारु चपल मिलि मेघ चपल चमकति चहुं ओरनि मन भावन कहं भेटि भूमि कूकति
निसि मोरनि हरि रीति रवन रवनी निकर अरु त्रजेर भावन पिय गमनु करवे कों कहे गवन
सुनियें नहि स्रवनः ॥ ॥५॥ ॥ इति सावन मास समाप्त ॥ ॥

during the monsoon season, a traditional time for togetherness and love; indeed, Radha tempts her beloved to stay by offering him sweet delicacies. The festival of Teej (commemorating the union of the goddess Parvati with Shiva) is being celebrated in the foreground; women bearing a clay statue of Parvati (locally known as Gauri) advance in procession. The diagonal lines of the painting that impart animation, the shading of contours that lends a measure of volume, the lush vegetation and the interplay of brilliant colours are characteristic of the skills of the Bundi artistic studio at this time. The erotic sentiment of love and *sringara rasa* is projected to great effect.

'Gajalakshmi', or the goddess Lakshmi lustrated by elephants (an ancient image found on coins from the third century BC), forms the subject of a startling composition from Bundi (fig. 9), possibly painted as an icon for royalty or as the first folio of a manuscript to provide the patron and the work with an auspicious beginning. The goddess Lakshmi's attributes of a lotus held in one hand, and the goddess Sarasvati's attributes of a crescent moon on her head and an *ankush* (elephant goad) held in another hand could be a local variation of the usual Gajalakshmi imagery. The proffering of the goddess's tresses for lustration appears to be a playful twist, as does the sympathetic drawing of two trumpeting elephants with wings in brilliant colours. The wings probably relate to the myth of the first elephants on earth, mythological winged creatures that flew, until a branch of a tree they alighted on broke and killed an ascetic's pupils. The ascetic, it seems, cursed the elephants and deprived them of their wings and their ability to freely roam the skies.[19] The two winged elephants are shown again in the lower register of the painting, cavorting in the cosmic ocean from which they joyfully fill their ritual vessels. The bright yellow colour is an organic pigment made from the urine of cows fed mango leaves, and the red pigment is derived from lac (a red dye from an insect) mixed with vermilion.

Bundi was adversely affected by power struggles, intrigues and battles involving Kotah, Jaipur and the Marathas from the second quarter of the eighteenth century onwards. Alliances kept shifting as events unfolded; the Marathas, now the most powerful force in India, were called upon as allies when needed and, having no loyalty to any state, fought for monetary gain. The power vacuum created by successive weak Mughal emperors after the death of Aurangzeb

36 (*opposite*). 'Ladies bathing by a river'. Bundi, Rajasthan, 1740–45. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 19.7 x 13 cm. British Museum.

Detail of fig. 37, 'A noblewoman in a courtyard with her pet cat and pigeons'.

37. 'A noblewoman in a courtyard with her pet cat and pigeons'. Bundi, Rajasthan, 1770. Opaque watercolour on paper, 22 x 14.4 cm. British Museum.

prompted Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur, the strongest Rajput ruler of the time, to oust Budh Singh of Bundi in 1729 and install a puppet ruler in his place. After various attempts to retake Bundi with the help of Kotah cousins and the Marathas, Budh Singh's son Umed Singh finally regained his patrimony in 1748, but at great cost. Growing tributes demanded by the Marathas in return for their help had depleted the state's coffers and Bundi never regained her previous glory. During this period of war and strife, the

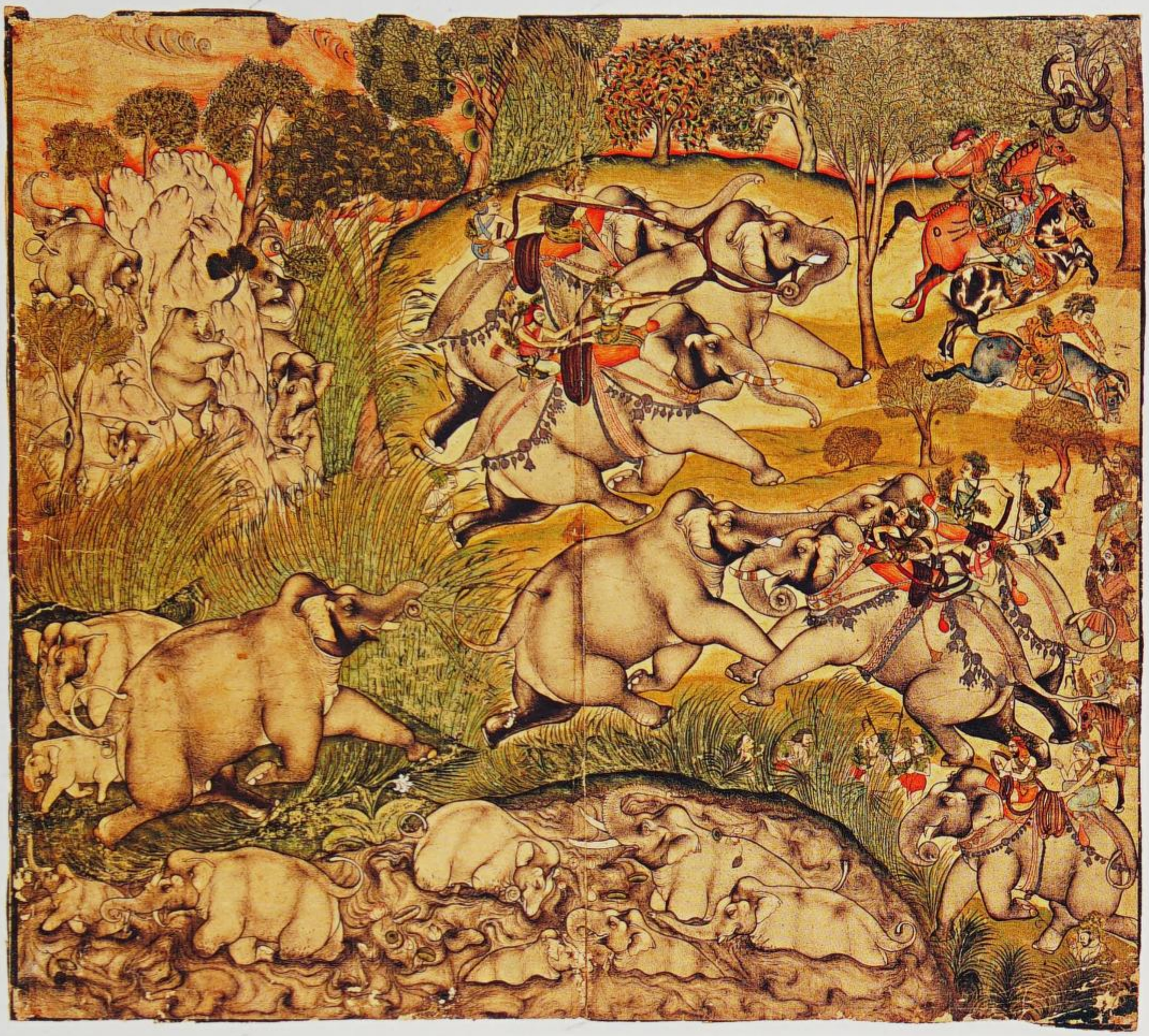
38. 'Ladies in the *zenana*'. Bundi, Rajasthan, 1775. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 17.3 x 25.5 cm. British Museum.

quality of Bundi painting declined and some Bundi artists migrated to neighbouring Uniara, a small fiefdom of Jaipur, from which several paintings in the Bundi style are known.[20]

By the second quarter of the eighteenth century scenes of *zenana* and ladies at leisure, and erotic themes such as ladies bathing and dressing, become popular in Bundi illustrations (fig. 36). The large, well-modelled figures, fine delineation of hair, natural landscape receding into the horizon and flaming, orange-streaked sky seen in fig. 36 are all influenced by Muhammad Shah-period Mughal painting. The delicately rendered black colour wash around facial profiles is an important distinguishing feature of Bundi painting in the eighteenth century and, while almost imperceptible in fig. 36, it becomes quite prominent and jarring in later works. Towards the end of the eighteenth century Bundi and Kotah paintings display a taste for cool, clean expanses of white architecture (fig. 37), also a legacy of later Muhammad Shah-period work, in which vast expanses of white or grey architecture are found. Fig. 37 depicts expressive movement and a controlled line and is a charming example of Bundi painting in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The black shading around the facial contour of the lady has, however, become excessive and is a disturbing feature. Fig. 38 is drawn with a harder line and shows a surfeit of shading, indicating a decline from the animated works of the past.[21]

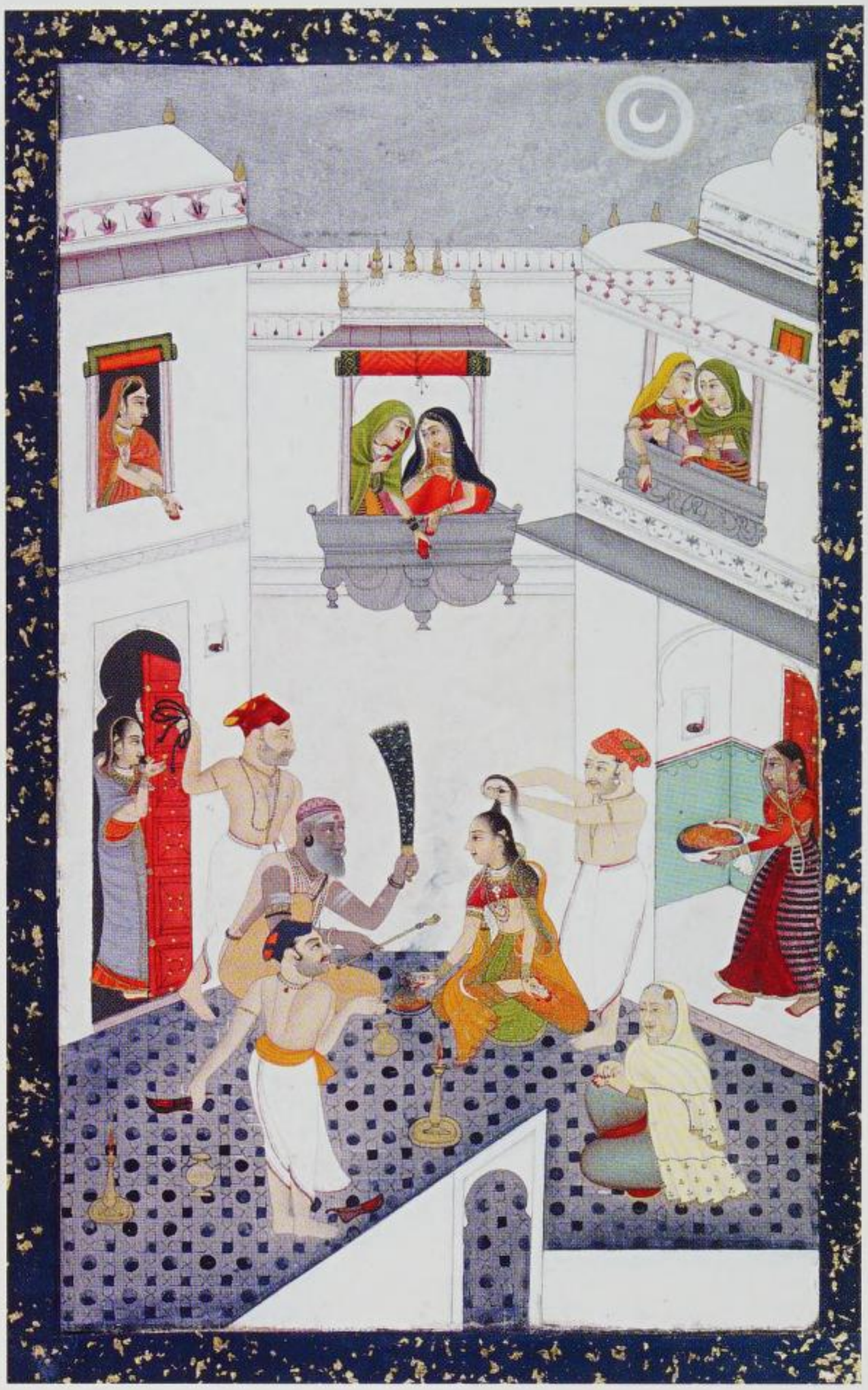
39. 'Madho Singh worshipping Krishna'. Kotah, Rajasthan, 1680. Opaque watercolour on paper, 29.7 x 21.2 cm. British Museum.

Paintings from Bundi are refreshing, lively, and among the most charming of all Rajasthani works. The state's artistic decline at the end of the eighteenth century was not matched by its sister state of Kotah, which continued to produce works of extraordinary quality throughout the eighteenth century and up until the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Bundi and Kotah paintings of the seventeenth century are extremely similar and virtually interchangeable: it is possible that the same artists painted for the rulers of both states, as only half a day's journey on horseback separated them. The Kotah studio, however, soon experimented with original studies of the hunt, which have become a well-known and distinctive genre of this school.



Kotah was founded in 1264 when Koteya, a tribal chieftain, was killed by Jaitsi, an ancestor of the Haras. A new citadel and palaces were erected there by the Haras; the town was named Kotah after the slain tribal chieftain, and it became a fief of Bundi. Madho Singh, son of Rao Ratan Singh of Bundi, was given this fiefdom in 1624. He served the Mughals alongside his brother, Prince Shatru Sal of Bundi, and distinguished himself in combat when he pursued and defeated Khan Jahan Lodi in 1631.[22] For this act of bravery the emperor Shah Jahan granted Madho Singh his independence from Bundi, and Kotah became a separate state. Subsequent Kotah rulers continued to fight in Mughal armies alongside their Bundi cousins, although rivalry now existed between them for favours bestowed by their overlords.

40. 'Wild elephant hunt'. Kotah, Rajasthan, 1745. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper. 46.3 x 52.1 cm. Howard Hodgkin Collection.

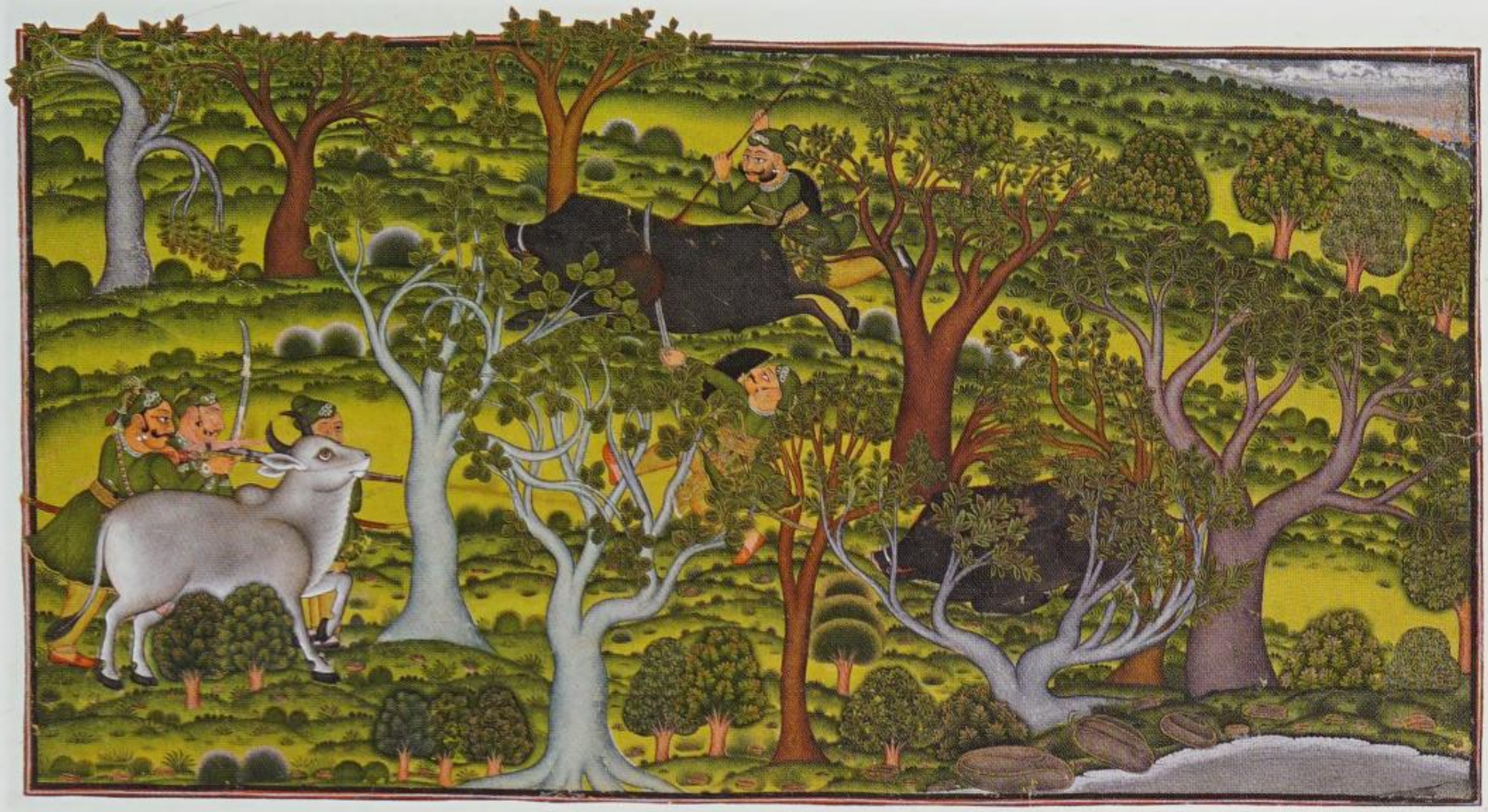


41. 'A *diksha*, or initiation ceremony'. Kotah, Rajasthan, 1770. Opaque watercolour on paper, 30.4 x 18.3 cm. British Museum.

The Rajput noble seen worshipping a vision of Krishna in a forest glade in fig. 39, painted in the Bundi style, may be a posthumous portrait of Madho Singh, the first Rao of Kotah.[23] The auspicious red colouring behind Krishna and his attendants suggests the appearance of the deity in his *lila* on earth. The stark black background, tall lilac flowering stems and drooping lilac flower may have been copied from paintings in the Deccan, as various Kotah and Bundi princes campaigned in that area from the reign of Rao Ratan Singh (r. 1607–31) until the reign of Rao Aniruddha Singh (r. 1681–95), and it is possible that some Deccani paintings were brought back to Kotah. The brilliant red background colour, exuberant figure of dancing Krishna, stock renditions of ladies' faces and figures, and simplified palm trees are, however, all features from Bundi and Kotah.

Kotah paintings of the hunt are the most distinctive of all Rajput paintings in that genre. A scene depicting the chase and capture of wild elephants is sensitively and dramatically rendered by a master Kotah artist (fig. 40). The skilled composition, fluid, controlled drawing, splendid portrayal of wild beasts in action, and sophisticated use of colour (dull grey contrasting with shades of green) all attest to the talent of the Kotah studio and the deserved accolades its artists have received in the field of art. The realistic depiction of Kotah's hunting grounds particularly distinguishes Kotah hunt paintings from the usual Rajput illustrations evoking emotional expression, for the former describe landscape naturally rather than symbolically.[24]

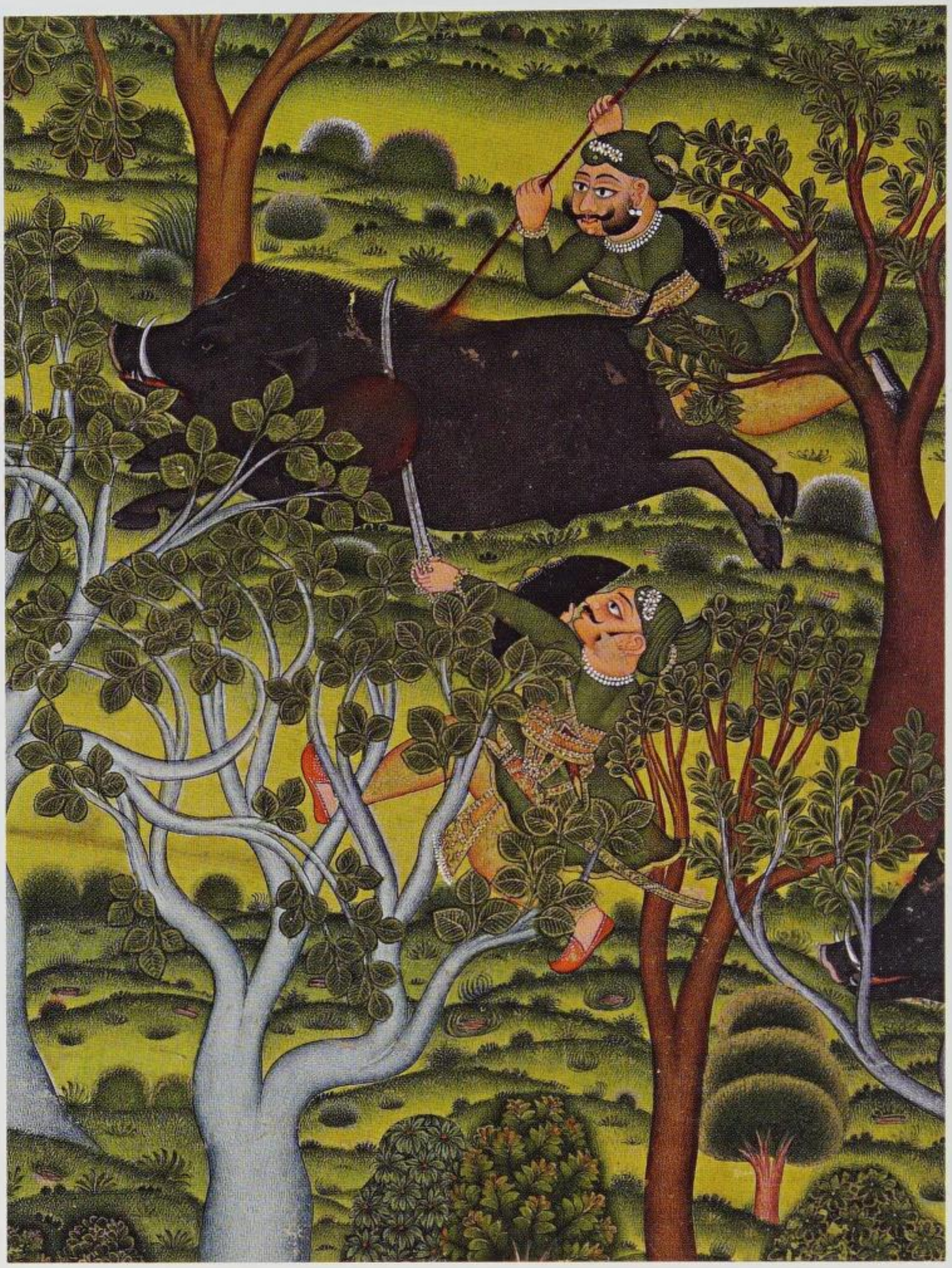
Fig. 41, depicting a *diksha*, or initiation ceremony, shows the solemn initiation of a young lady of royal lineage into the Kanphata yogi sect of Shaivism and contrasts with paintings of the hunt. It demonstrates that Rajput artists were accomplished in various genres of painting, including portraiture, hunt scenes and manuscript illustration, and could, it seems, switch from one to another with relative ease. The setting of this unusual ceremony, which takes place at night by the light of the moon, is the *zenana* courtyard of a palace, in which an elderly dark-skinned guru with the *kanphata*, or 'split-earring', in his right ear presides over the ceremony. He appears



42. 'Hunting wild boar'. Kotah, Rajasthan, 1784. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 24 x 46 cm. British Museum.

to be explaining the initiation rites to the lady and her forthcoming role as a *yogini*. Three assistants help with the rites: one holds the lady's hair, which will be tied into a topknot, or *jata*; one holds her *yoga-patta*, or yoga band, which will aid in extended periods of meditation; and the third holds her shoes, which she has removed. The ritual takes place around a sacred fire from which smoke emanates; hot coals are being brought in by a young maid to the right-hand side of the background to add to the fire (fire has been a sacred part of ritual and ceremony from Vedic times).[25] Ladies of the *zenana* watch from doorways and balconies and gesture at the unusual proceedings, perhaps in wonderment at the idea of discarding a privileged life in a *zenana* for the hard life of a *yogini*, who from then on will live either in a simple commune or in a hut. India's religious history is full of stories of the ruling classes renouncing worldly pleasures in order to gain spiritual enlightenment (the Buddha himself being the prime example), though renunciation by women was rare and the depiction of the renunciation ritual in a royal court painting even rarer. The immaculate white architecture, which provides a stark backdrop for the splashes of colour used to depict figures, and other details such as doors, eaves and roller blinds, were adapted from paintings of the Muhammad Shah period.

Raja Umed Singh I (r. 1771–1819) was an avid patron of the hunt and a number of hunt illustrations date from his reign, either commissioned by him or by his powerful chief minister, Zalim Singh Jhala. The rise of Zalim Singh Jhala, first as the Kotah army's commander-in-chief, began during the reign of Maharao Shatru Sal (r. 1758–64). As *divan*, or chief minister, during



Detail of fig. 42, 'Hunting wild boar'.

the reigns of Goman Singh (r. 1764–71) and Umed Singh I, Zalim Singh Jhala gradually gained complete control of Kotah and was effectively recognized as its de facto ruler. He is a dominant presence in most paintings of Umed Singh's reign. In a surreal landscape of jungle undergrowth, the figures of Umed Singh, Zalim Singh Jhala and attendants wearing green hunting costumes and turbans blend into their surroundings (fig. 42). The panoramic vista of the dense jungle with the cliffs of Kotah rising in the background seen in other Umed Singh-period hunt paintings is lacking in fig. 42.[26] Mewar artists were brought in to paint at the Kotah studio towards the end of Umed Singh's reign, and fig. 42, drawn in a ponderous manner, with gold

outlined leaves adding to a heavily stylized representation, may have been the work of one of them. Comparing fig. 42 with the earlier painting of the elephant hunt (fig. 40) elucidates the evolution of Kotah hunt painting from a dynamic, rhythmic expression to a heavily stylized, decorative look, the latter characteristic signifying the general trend of Rajasthani painting in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Maharaja Ram Singh II (r. 1827–66), a whimsical Kotah ruler, one of the last few Rajput patrons of painting, commissioned a large number of paintings of himself in various courtly pursuits in the *tamasha* genre.[27] Although these illustrations are executed in a rather fine manner, the animation and rhythm of earlier Kotah works have long since vanished.

AMBER AND JAIPUR

THE KACHHWAHA CLAN of Jaipur, like the Sesodias of Mewar, claim legendary descent from the solar race and from the god king Rama. They migrated to the north-eastern area of Rajasthan from central India around the eleventh century, fought against local Mina tribes in the Dhundar region and established themselves at Amber. Their capital city Jaipur was founded in 1728 by Raja Sawai Jai Singh II, a prominent figure in eighteenth-century India. In the sixteenth century the state of Amber was insignificant compared with its larger, well-known neighbours of Mewar and Marwar. Amber's proximity to Delhi made it the gateway for Mughal military campaigns in Rajasthan and the Deccan. Realizing the superior power of the Mughals and the inevitability of their progress through Kachhwaha territories to other states in Rajasthan, the early rulers of Amber preferred an alliance with Akbar in order to maintain peace rather than the protracted hostilities chosen by the more orthodox Sesodia rulers of Mewar. In this they proved to be politically astute.

Raja Bihar Mal of Amber (r. 1547–73) secured a favoured position with the Mughals by arranging a marriage alliance between his daughter, Hira Kunwar (who later gave birth to Prince Salim), and Akbar in 1562. Bihar Mal's son Bhagwant Das (r. 1573–89) and grandson Raja Man Singh I (r. 1589–1614) served Akbar faithfully, and for this they were rewarded with untold wealth and power, enabling Amber to prosper and become one of the leading states in Rajasthan from the sixteenth century onwards. The emperor Jahangir maintained family ties with Kachhwaha royalty by marrying Man Singh's sister in 1584 and his granddaughter in 1608. The Kachhwaha rulers, therefore, had an intimate relationship with their Mughal overlords, more so than any other Rajput state.

Amber patronage of the arts began with Man Singh I, who spent the major part of his reign engaged in military campaigns for Akbar and contributed in no small measure to the rapid expansion of the Mughal empire. In sympathy

43. 'Raja Bhao Singh'. Amber, Rajasthan, 1620. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 11.8 x 6.4 cm. British Library.

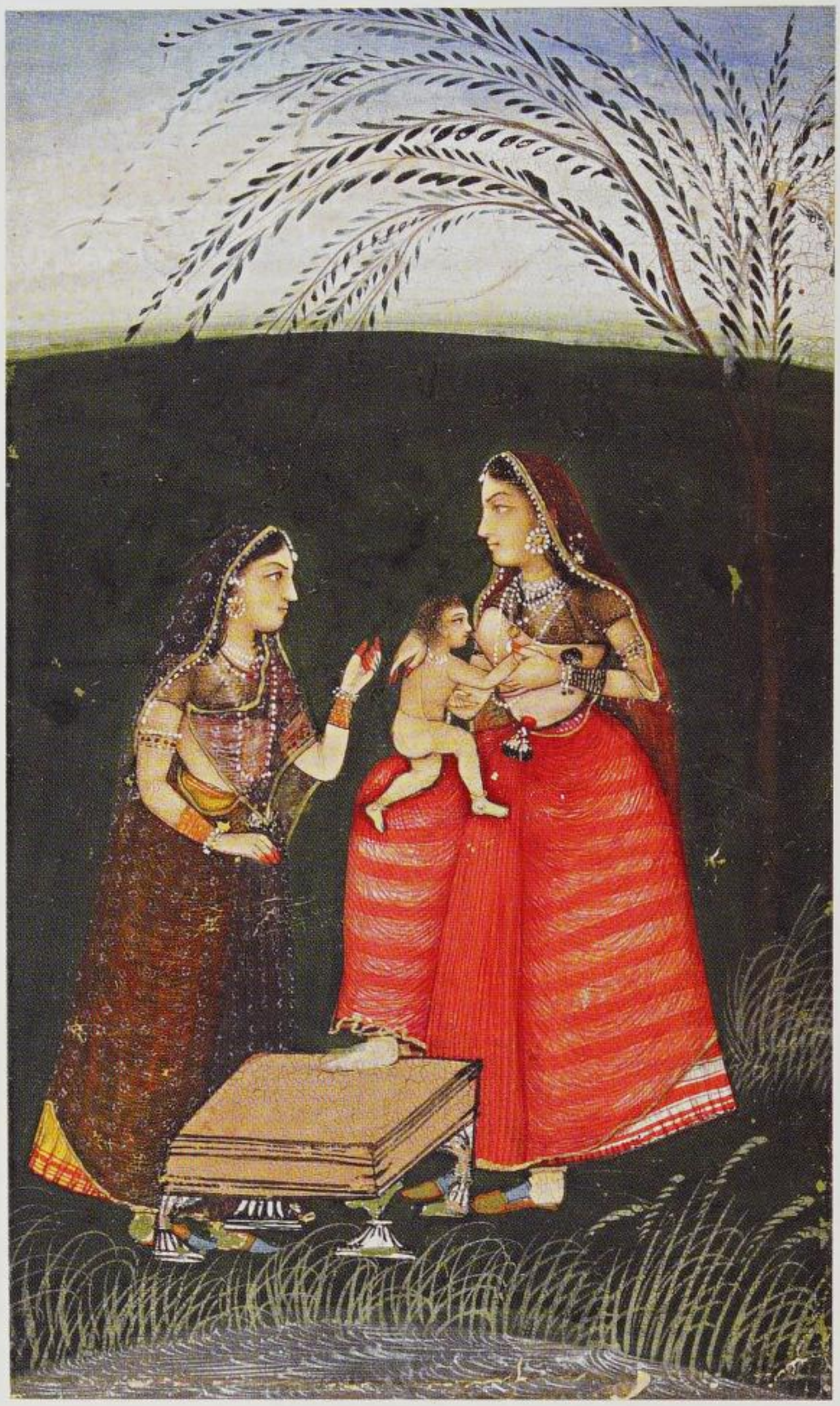
with Akbar's vision of an integrated, peaceful and artistically prosperous empire, he built a prodigious number of Hindu temples – not only in Amber but as far east as Jagannath Puri – and palaces in Amber and Rohtas, as well as two mosques in honour of his overlord. The wall paintings that he commissioned in the Amber palace and at Bairat provide evidence of a flourishing courtly painting atelier at Amber.[28] Although these are executed in a simple, direct Early Rajput style, a portrait of Man Singh's son and successor Raja Bhao Singh (r. 1614–21), in the highly refined imperial style, could have been painted by a Mughal artist at the Amber court (fig. 43). Many paintings of Amber royal and courtly subjects previously thought to be Mughal have now been attributed to Amber patronage by the scholars Catherine Glynn and Ellen Smart, who have provided evidence of an 'Amber Album', a collection of portraits and animal studies painted in a highly Mughalized style under Amber patronage.[29] Their position within the inner circle of the Mughal court would have exposed the Kachhwaha rulers to its art, and it is more than likely that a Mughal-trained artist would have been commissioned by the early rulers of Amber to paint their portraits in emulation of their overlords.

In fig. 43 Bhao Singh stands at ease with feet apart and hands crossed, his hawkish, brooding face, with a long, drooping, curled moustache, seen in profile. Although the painting may not be as refined as a contemporary Mughal portrait of the Jahangiri period, the artist has managed to capture the aloof stance of his subject well. The soft colours, transparent *jama* (long shirt), subtle modelling and shading, and the artist's attempt to capture individuality are all features of Jahangiri-period Mughal painting.

The title 'Mirza', or exalted prince, was bestowed on Raja Jai Singh I (r. 1621–67) by the emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1628–58), who held his Rajput protégé in high esteem. In the tradition of his ancestors the Mirza Raja was a great patron of art, literature and poetry: indeed, the famous *Satsai* by the poet Bihari was composed at his court. He was, like his contemporary Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur, a shrewd politician who sided with Aurangzeb against Dara Shikoh in the Mughal war of succession. A portrait of the seated Mirza Raja with his son Kunwar Ram Singh I, painted at Amber in the Mughal style, dating to 1645–50, is in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin,[30] and a copy of that painting, instead depicting the Mirza Raja with his grandson Kishan Singh in exactly the same positions, produced by the Bikaneri artist Ruknuddin, is in the British Library (see fig. 61).

44 (*opposite*). 'A lady ascetic'. Amber, Rajasthan, 1655–60. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 20.2 x 12.7 cm. British Museum.

The lady ascetic in fig. 44 is painted in the same refined idiom as the portrait of Bhao Singh, and was most probably painted around 1655–60 during



45. 'A girl suckling a baby'. Amber, Rajasthan, 1660–70. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper. British Library.

the reign of Jai Singh I. The superb draughtsmanship and sensitive depiction of the lady contrast with the stiffly stylized plantain trees and rather unnatural twisting tree trunk with umbrella-like foliage, the latter characteristics revealing an undeniable Rajput sensibility. The setting appears to be a personal shrine and the lady of royal lineage (note the jewellery with which she is adorned). She is about to water a *tulsi* plant, sacred to Vishnu, while a stone icon of Nandi, Shiva's endearing mount, gazes at her from the right foreground. The tree trunk curving voluptuously behind her is suggestive of her innocent yet sensual beauty, and the two birds seated on the tree are symbolic of union, perhaps in this instance union with the divine. Symbols such as these echo Rajput rather than Mughal aesthetics. This then is a combination of Mughal sensitivity with Rajput elements, forming a local Amber style adapted by the artist according to his patron's pleasure.

This Mughal-influenced style is continued in 'A girl suckling a baby' (fig. 45), an interesting, rather realistic genre painting of village life. The composition with the large figures and lone trailing plant in the background is extremely pleasing and original for a Rajput illustration. The faces of the ladies are idealized and similar in style to Mughal painting of the late Shah Jahan/early Aurangzeb period, but the tree and high horizon are evocative of Rajput taste. The delicate line used in fig. 44 has changed to a bolder one with shading along the contours to add volume.

46 (*opposite*). 'The month of *Magha* (January/February)'. Folio from a *baramasa* series. Amber, Rajasthan, 1700–05. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 29 x 20.2 cm. British Museum.

'Forests and gardens echo the sweet notes of the peacock, pigeon and *koel* (a bird). The poet Keshavdas says that bees are humming around as if they have lost their way. All ten directions are scented with musk, camphor and sandalwood. The sweet sounds of the *mridanga* and other musical instruments are heard throughout the night. Young men and holy men, all celebrate *Vasanta*. The *nayika* says to her beloved, "If you love me, do not leave me in the month of Magha".' V.P. Dwivedi, *Barahmasa: The Song of Seasons in Literature and Art*, p. 139.

॥अथ माहब वर्नन॥ छप्पै॥ बनउपबनकेकीकपोतकोकिलबकुबोलत॥ केसव फूलेभँमरभरे
बकुभाँयनडोलत॥ मृगमदमलयकपूरधूरिधूसरतिदसौंदिस॥ तालमृदंगउपंगसुनतसंगी
तगीतनिस॥ खेलतबसंतसंततसुघरसंतअसंतअनंतगति॥ घरनाहनछड्डियमाहमहिजो
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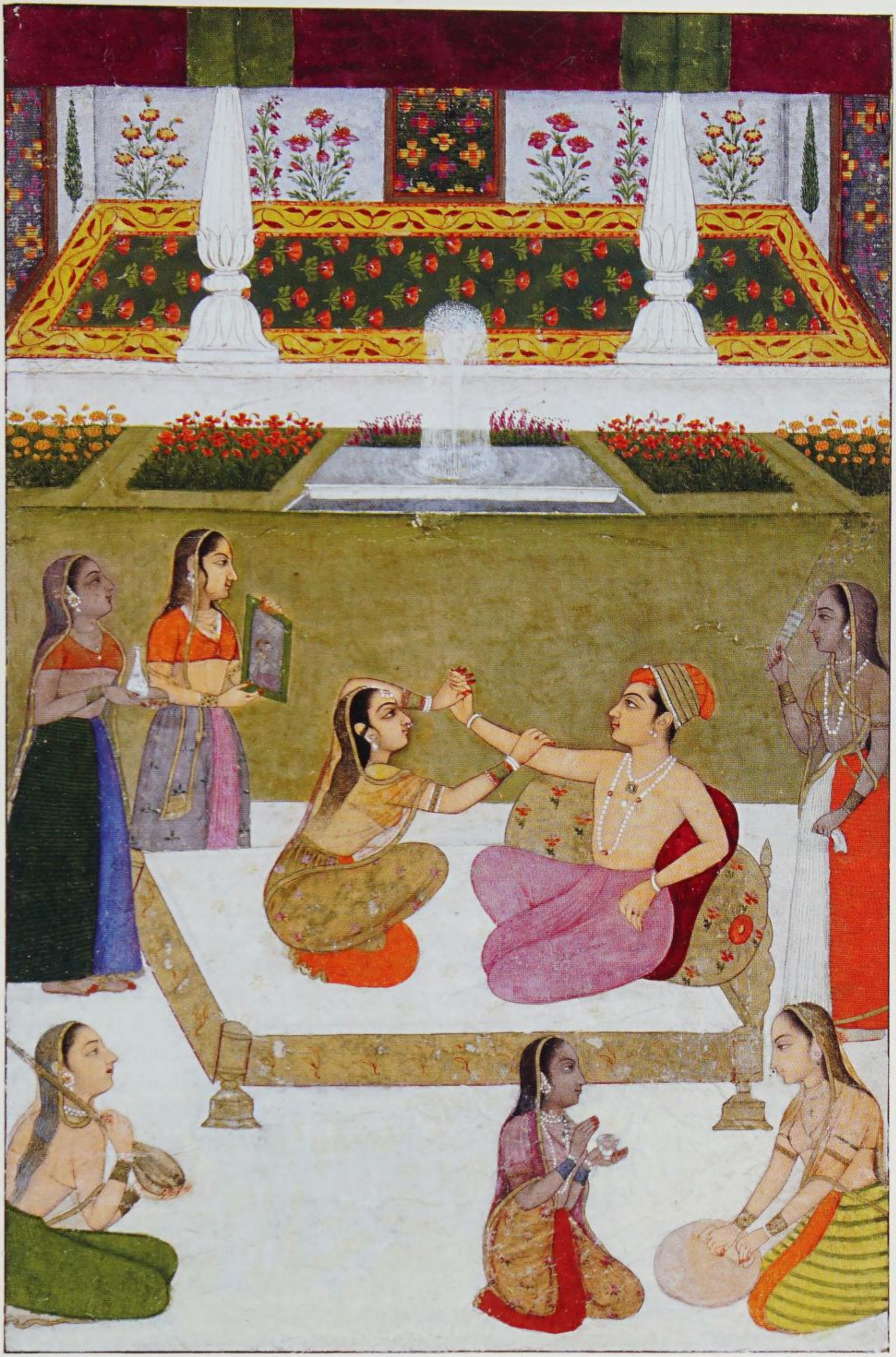
Sawai Jai Singh II (r. 1699–1743), the founder of the city of Jaipur, was an intellectual ruler with interests in social reform, art, architecture and science. His reign covered a turbulent political period of increasing Rajput revolt against Aurangzeb's orthodox policies, and the subsequent rise of the rapacious Marathas, filling the power vacuum created by the decline of Mughal dominance. The rejection of artistic activity propagated by Aurangzeb towards the end of his reign led to an influx of Mughal-trained artists seeking employment with Mughal nobility and at regional centres in Rajasthan. The planning and construction of the new city of Jaipur attracted artisans from all over India, and Sawai Jai Singh's court became a centre of intellectual and artistic pursuits owing to his cultured personality.

The style of a folio from an early *baramasa* series painted at Amber (fig. 46) during the reign of Sawai Jai Singh II affords a sharp contrast to the naturalism of earlier paintings. The simply executed figures, quaint horizontally layered compositional formula and delicate use of line lead to the conclusion that this series precedes the only dated *ragamala* series from Amber (1709), now in the Kankroli collection, as the latter is painted in a slightly more sophisticated and established style. The buoyant mood of Vasant Panchmi, a spring festival that takes place in the month of Magha (January/February), has been captured visually by depicting the hero and heroine seated among musicians, throwing *rangoli* (coloured powder) at each other. The imagery literally follows the verse inscribed above, which tells of peacocks, pigeons and other birds crying out to each other in anticipation of spring, the sound of music throughout the night, bees humming over the lovers' heads, and the resultant appeal of the *nayika* to her beloved not to leave her in the month of Magha. The muted colours, niches inset with vases, bouquets of flowers painted on walls, uniform rows of trees and shrubbery, and a Persianate red railing (used frequently in early Mughal works) are a puzzling throwback to the popular Mughal style in vogue a century earlier (1590–1610).

We therefore have two stylistic streams in the Amber court during the seventeenth century. One may be called the classical Amber style, with Rajput characteristics, begun under the patronage of Raja Man Singh I and continued by his successors. This style would have been used in painting literary and religious illustrations in the classical tradition and is epitomized by the *baramasa* painting of 1700–05 (fig. 46). The other is a highly Mughalized style, possibly by a Mughal artist in Amber, in keeping with imperial taste, as can be seen in figs 44 and 45. These stylistic streams at Amber culminate during the eighteenth century in the distinctive and easily recognizable Jaipur idiom.

The number of paintings commissioned increased dramatically at Amber and later at Jaipur from the beginning of the eighteenth century onwards. Apart from portraiture, paintings of literary and religious subjects were produced in prolific quantities. Sawai Jai Singh II invited Jesuit priests to Jaipur to help him with his scientific and other research, and they could have brought

47 (*opposite*). 'A prince being entertained by ladies'. Jaipur, Rajasthan, 1725–30. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 17.2 x 11.3 cm. British Museum.



48. 'Portrait of Raja Pratap Singh'. Jaipur, Rajasthan, 1780. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 23 x 16.2 cm. British Museum.

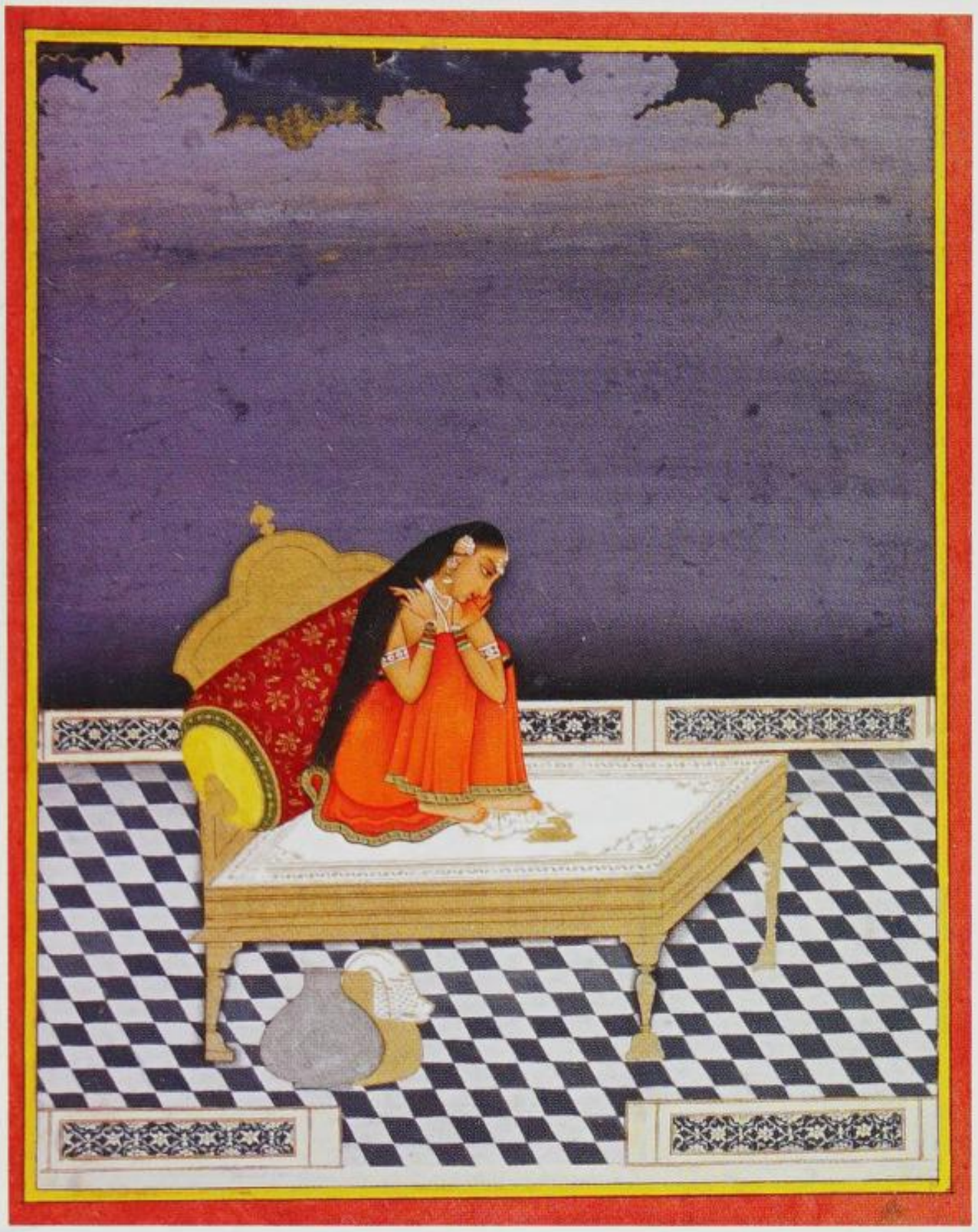
with them European prints from the Bible or genre paintings of life in Europe, which were possibly studied by Jaipur artists. European and Mughal elements were blended with local ones to produce the beginnings of the new Jaipur style.

'A prince entertained by ladies' (fig. 47) typifies the Muhammad Shah-period style of Mughal painting, with the stiffly reclining figure of the prince surrounded by tall, lithe female attendants in gardens neatly laid out in rigid symmetrical patterns, amid cool white architectural forms. A certain degree of stylization is beginning to assert itself, and the line is harder than in previous works. Raja Madho Singh I (r. 1750–67) was also a keen patron of painting and commissioned illustrations recording court life, festivities and rituals, similar to the Mewar ranas' recordings of their courtly life in this period.

The portrait of Raja Pratap Singh (r. 1778–1803) standing in profile (fig. 48) contrasts markedly with the earlier one of Raja Bhao Singh (fig. 43) and depicts the evolution of the Jaipur style from softly muted portraiture to highly stylized depictions asserting decoration and the use of heavy gold paint. More attention is paid to the opulence of garments than the characterization of personality; the line is harder and compositions become stereotyped. This heavy luxurious style is prevalent in the genre of classical and religious works as well. 'A desolate nayika' (fig. 49) depicts the heavily outlined figure of a woman garbed in bright orange costume seated on a chair with hands entwined in front of her, her face downcast in a pensive mood. The grey-and-black chequered balustrade and dark grey sombre sky add to the feeling of melancholy that pervades the painting. The artist conveys the emotion of *sringara rasa*, although it is signifying love in isolation or separation, the heroine thinking of her lover who is perhaps far away.

The painting of Hindola Raga (fig. 15) from Jaipur (1800) is in a similar style with the emphasis now solely on opulence and decorative elements. Figures are hard-edged and the landscape, though technically superior, has a rigidity that is totally superficial. Even the well-rounded clouds are outlined in gold paint. This stilted though technically perfect style continues well into the nineteenth century at Jaipur.

MARWAR



49. 'A desolate nayika'. Jaipur, Rajasthan, 1790. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 17.3 x 14 cm. British Museum.

The Rathors of Marwar claim a lineage as ancient as that of the Sesodias of Mewar, and equally endearing legends and traditions. Unlike the constant struggle of the Sesodias against Mughal dominance, however, the Rathors were allies of the Mughal emperors, and their early painting has the inevitable stamp of Mughal realism and artistic refinement. Marwar is situated in the western region of Rajasthan, within the confines of the inhospitable sandy wastelands of the Thar desert, hence the hard life and poverty of its people. This could have been the cause of their early alliance with the Mughals, as a means to gain wealth, economic prosperity and power. Their early history, like most other Rajput clans, is speculative, but there appears to be a possible ancestral connection with the Rashtrakutas of the Deccan. According to bardic sources the first ruler was Sheoji (thirteenth century), grandson of Jaichand of Kanauj, but it was not until 1459 that Rao Jodha built Meherangarh fort on a desert cliff-top called Bhakurcheeria, or 'mountain of the birds', and founded Jodhpur, their capital city.

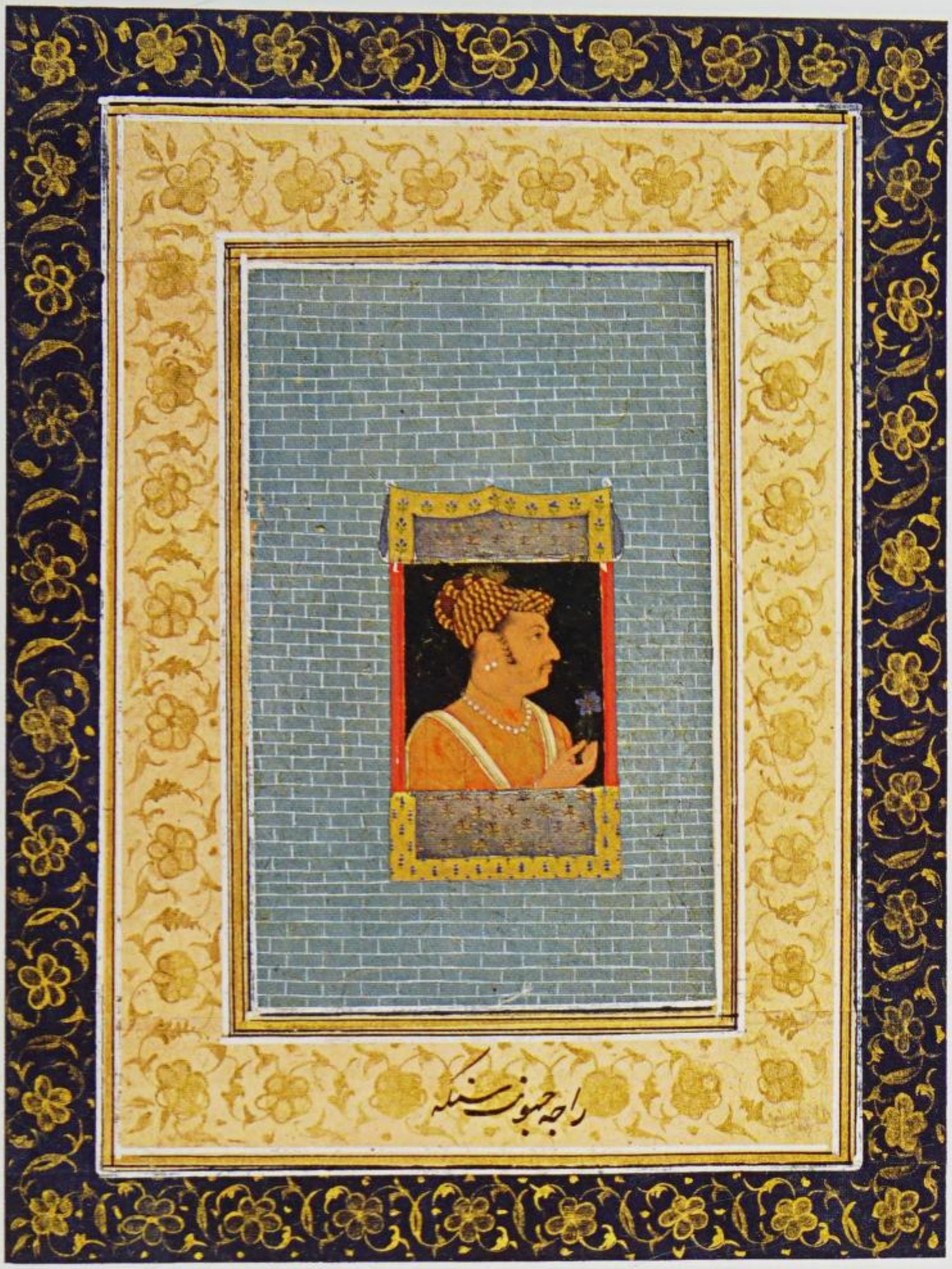
The earliest known paintings from Marwar, the Pali Ragamala series (dated 1623), were probably produced in a *thikana* (fiefdom) whose centre was at Pali, a flourishing commercial town with an important position on the trade routes. This distinctive series provides evidence of a local folk-painting tradition that may have led to its quaint style.[31] The wide-eyed figures with pupils fixed to the upper eyelid, rounded heads and small pursed mouths, simplified trees, pink-painted brick walls, distinctively shaped legs of furniture and earthy palette in 'Gunakari Ragini' (fig. 50), from a *ragamala* series, are similar to features in the Pali Ragamala, and may be attributed to Marwar. The sophistication of this series compared with the Pali one, however, justifies a courtly provenance; thus these paintings may be among the earliest ascribed to Jodhpur.[32] The iconography of the series resembles the Chawand Ragamala from Mewar (1605), and it is possible that artistic crosscurrents existed between the states of Mewar and Marwar as they shared a common border. The lovelorn lady pining for her lover, plucking flowers to make a garland for him and hoping that he will soon return, symbolizes the emotion of *viraha*, or

50. 'Gunakari Ragini'. Folio from a *ragamala* series. Marwar, Rajasthan, 1630. Opaque watercolour on paper, 20 x 15.7 cm. British Museum.

'Blooming like a flower herself, she gathers blossoms with her heart full of gladness, / For the coming of her Lord Malkaus, she duly prepares the bed.'
O.C. Gangoly, *Ragas and Raginis*, II, pl. XXV.

longing. This series, together with a scattering of literary and poetical paintings, are examples of the simple, robust Early Rajput style at Jodhpur.[33]

Udai Singh (r. 1583–95), a Rathor ruler known affectionately as Mota Raja, or enormous king, by Akbar because of his large girth, gave his daughter Jodhbai in marriage to Prince Salim, later known as Jahangir, and with that act attained stability and power as a vassal of the Mughal empire. Securely allied to the Mughals, Marwar reached its zenith of prosperity and affluence under Sur Singh (r. 1595–1619), Gaj Singh I (r. 1619–38) and Jaswant Singh I (r. 1638–78). Sur Singh and Gaj Singh I received the highest *mansabs* (offices) for successfully commanding Mughal armies; in return for his loyal services Gaj Singh I was given the title of Maharaja by the emperor Jahangir.



51. 'Maharaja Gaj Singh at a *jharokha* window' (the inscription identifies the portrait as Jaswant Singh). Jodhpur, Marwar, Rajasthan, 1635. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 11.5 x 7.2 cm. British Museum.

Royal portraiture was initiated at the Jodhpur court by Gaj Singh I. The painting of Gaj Singh at a *jharokha* window (fig. 51) is in the refined Mughal style, and was probably painted by a Mughal artist imported into the Jodhpur studio.[34] The idea of framing the visage of a ruler in a *jharokha* window was a Mughal one: Jahangir looks out of just such a window in a painting from the *Jahangirnama*, which records various incidents from his life, while his subjects gaze at him in adulation from below.[35] The Jodhpur painting by contrast is merely a portrait of Gaj Singh's face framed in a most unusual sea-green brick enclosure surrounded by margins and borders, the brilliant colours indicating Rajput taste.

52. 'Maharaja Jaswant Singh and nobles' (unfinished painting). Jodhpur, Marwar, Rajasthan, 1640–42. Opaque watercolour on paper, 14.7 x 21.5 cm. British Museum.

Gaj Singh's successor, Maharaja Jaswant Singh I (r. 1638–78), a shrewd though sometimes unscrupulous politician, was the bane of the Mughal empire under Aurangzeb, as he was defiant of the emperor's intolerant religious policies. It is said that, when Aurangzeb threatened to destroy temples in Marwar, Jaswant Singh responded by threatening to destroy the mosques in Kabul in retaliation. Jaswant Singh was one of the most powerful royal personalities of seventeenth-century India, and probably had the temperament and capacity to fulfil such a boastful threat; therefore Aurangzeb probably considered it prudent to leave the Rajput ruler and Marwar well alone. 'Maharaja Jaswant Singh I and nobles' (fig. 52), an extremely sensitive and refined study of character, could be mistaken for a painting from the imperial Mughal court. Courtly clan hierarchy is evident in this formal representation: the ruler, 'the first among equals' (as his chieftains were usually from the same ancestral family), is seated in the centre in durbar, with chieftains occupying positions of importance in hierarchical sequence beside him.[36] The painting is in the Shah Jahan-period style, which is often described as the apogee of refinement and Mughal technique. Other portraits of Jaswant Singh – in a garden surrounded by his *zenana*, standing, and on a horse – show Rajput elements of a bolder style and brighter palette and are not as refined as fig. 52,

an indication that artists painted in different styles at the royal Jodhpur court during his reign.

Portraiture continued to dominate painting at Jodhpur in the eighteenth century with a combination of Mughal and Rajput stylistic elements that led to the formation of a distinctively recognizable Marwari aesthetic. Jaswant Singh's death in 1678 marked the end of peace in Marwar, for Aurangzeb seized the opportunity presented by his demise to send Mughal troops into Jodhpur and claim Marwar as part of the empire. The following thirty years were difficult for the ruling family and the people of Marwar, and it is unsurprising that no paintings were commissioned. For thirty years the loyal followers of Ajit Singh (r. 1707–24), son of Jaswant Singh and heir to the Jodhpur throne, hid and protected him until he finally gained his patrimony following Aurangzeb's death in 1707. His successor, Maharaja Abhai Singh (r. 1724–49), was a contemporary of the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah, and Jodhpur court painting came to be influenced by the Muhammad Shah aesthetic of greater stylization, elongated figures, and expanding vistas receding into brilliant sunsets in the style of Dalchand, a Mughal artist who painted at the Jodhpur court.[37] Dalchand was the son of Bhavanidas, an artist who painted at the Kishangarh court, and it is known that Dalchand also painted at Kishangarh in a similar style to that exhibited at Abhai Singh's court (see fig. 67 from Kishangarh). Dalchand's paintings display the influence of his father's style in the expanded chests and arched backs that were to become heavily exaggerated in the later Kishangarh idiom.

Paintings from Marwari *thikanas* in the first quarter of the eighteenth century assume a distinctly Rajput flavour, veering away from the earlier Mughal-influenced style at Jodhpur. The painting of two Rathor nobles and attendants (fig. 53) has a slack, relatively unrefined line with no attention paid to illusion; in fact, the white *chhatris*, or domed pavilions, are absurdly close to the foreground of the seated group. The prominent use of the colour white in architecture and the attempt to convey the personal characteristics of the two nobles are Mughal elements. It seems that Marwari artists were inventing a style that absorbed Mughal techniques and adapting them to create an original expression. This trend continued in the mid-eighteenth century with Rajput taste tending to dominate Mughal sensibilities as time progressed.

The portrait of Thakur Hari Singh of Chandawal of the Kumpawat clan (see the frontispiece), painted during the reign of Maharaja Bijay Singh (r. 1752–93), emphasizes hierarchy, symbolism and emotion rather than verisimilitude. The ruler or clan chieftain is shown as being larger on a hierarchical scale than the lesser chieftains and attendants, rather like Hindu sculptural edifices in which the larger main deity is surrounded by smaller celestial beings or human figures. Attributes or symbols, such as the privilege of the ruler to imbibe from a hookah, begin to assume more importance with little attention paid to naturalism or individuality. The line is crisper, brushwork is extremely refined, decorative elements take precedence and there is a tendency

53 (*opposite*). 'Two Rathor nobles and attendants'. Marwar, Rajasthan, 1725–30. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 32.5 x 23.7 cm. British Museum.

54. 'Portrait of Maharaja Bhim Singh'. Jodhpur, Marwar, Rajasthan, 1795. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 29 x 18.8 cm. British Museum.

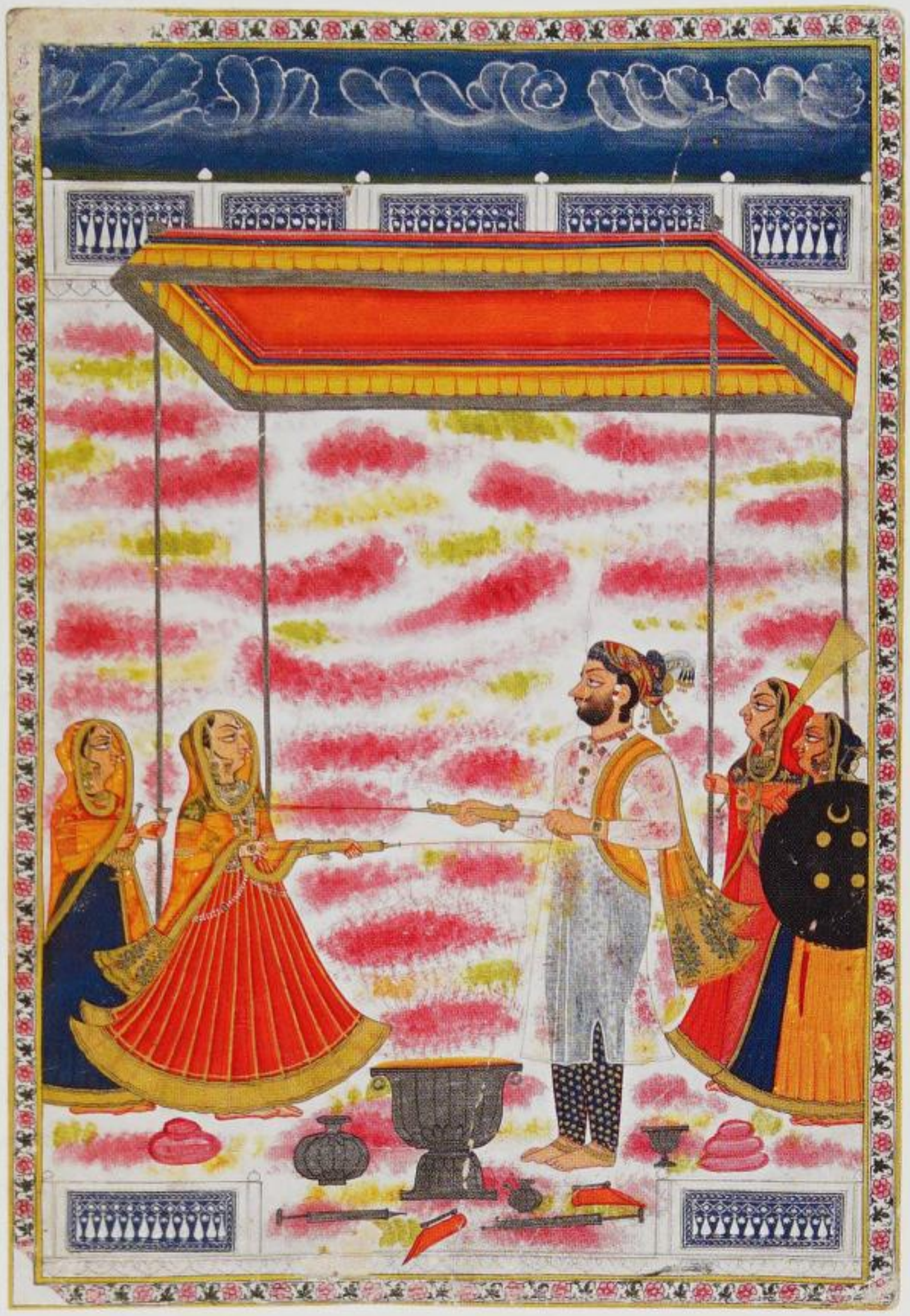
to crowd paintings with as much detail as possible. The monstrously large turban is wound copiously around Hari Singh's head in the style of the Kumpawat clan, whose ancestor gave away the Marwar throne to his younger brother Jodha (the ruling clan), taking for himself the small *jagir* (fief) of Bagri. The Thakur of Bagri therefore had the privilege of placing the *tilak* (red vermilion mark) on the forehead of the ruler's brow during the *rajtilak*

(accession to the throne) ceremony. Although Bijay Singh's reign was a troublesome period marked by wars with the Marathas, the painting studio appears not to have been affected, and numerous paintings in this boldly decorative and distinctively Marwari style were produced until the end of his reign.

A period of turmoil and political intrigue preceded the accession of Bhim Singh (r. 1793–1803) to the throne, and is reflected in a decline in the standard of paintings towards the end of the eighteenth century. A portrait of Bhim Singh (fig. 54) is stiffly executed and hastily drawn. Maharaja Man Singh (r. 1803–43), Bhim Singh's successor, was a cultivated patron of the arts, but a weak individual who was unscrupulously manipulated in turn by the Nath yogis, a mercenary called Amir Khan and the British. Though his state was in political turmoil, a large number of paintings of him and his *zenana* ladies in the *tamasha* genre, as well as extensive works pertaining to the religious beliefs of the Nath yogis, were commissioned. These are rendered with crystalline gold outlines and are highly stylized. Thakur Bakhtawar Singh of Auwa (fig. 55), a leading Marwari fiefdom, belonged to the Chumpawat clan and lived through these troubled times. At first Bakhtawar Singh supported Raja Man Singh and was raised to the position of chief minister, but eventually, as frustration at the dominance of the Nath yogis at the Jodhpur court intensified, he and other powerful nobles rebelled against the raja.[38] This proud equestrian portrait of Bakhtawar Singh was probably painted when he was chief minister of Jodhpur in 1807. The highly exaggerated, stylized blue–grey cloud formations, brilliantly coloured tassels decorating the horse trappings, and stolid figures of Bakhtawar Singh and his horse rendered in thick coats of pigment are typical of the Jodhpuri idiom in the early nineteenth century.

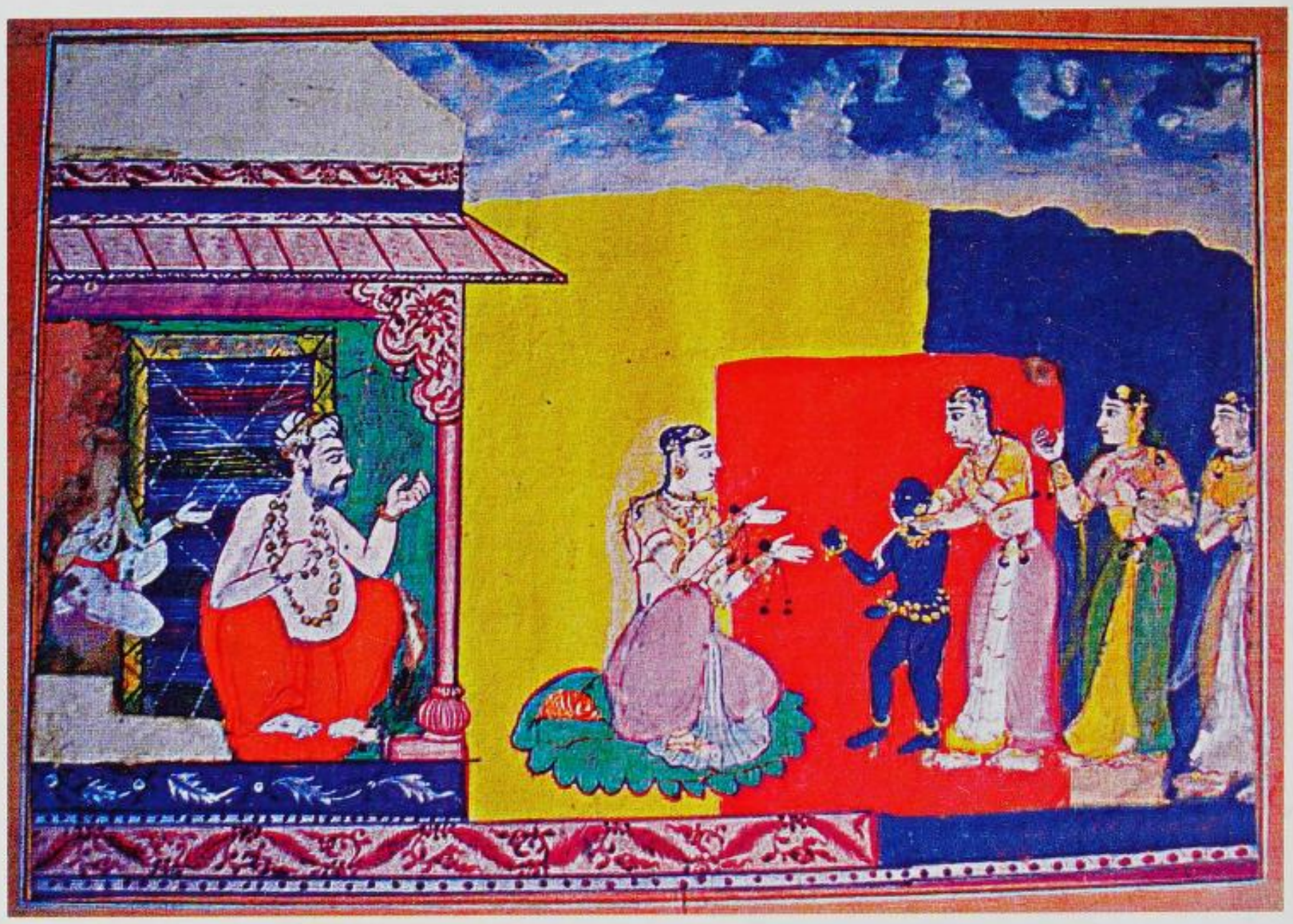
A sketch of Takhat Singh (r. 1843–73) during the festival of *holi* depicts his rigid, almost robotic figure squirting *rangoli* (coloured powder) at the stiff, doll-like figures of women with highly exaggerated flared scarves and skirts (fig. 56). The boldly decorative paintings epitomizing the Marwari aesthetic of the mid-eighteenth century have given way to a heavy, stiff style.

Apart from a scattering of paintings from the literary and mythological



55 (*opposite*). 'Thakur Bakhtawar Singh of Auwa'. Jodhpur, Marwar, Rajasthan, 1807. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 32.5 x 23.3 cm. British Museum.

56 (*above*). 'Maharaja Takhat Singh playing *holi*'. Jodhpur, Marwar, Rajasthan, 1850. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 31.1 x 21 cm. British Museum.



57. 'The *gopis* complain to Yashoda'. Folio from a *Bhagavata Purana* manuscript (part 1, book 10, ch. 8). Bikaner, Rajasthan, 1610. Opaque watercolour on paper. Private collection.

The *gopis* complain to Yashoda about Krishna's childish misdemeanours in the village. Yashoda is seated in the centre, the *gopis* and Krishna stand to the right, Nanda and Balarama are in the house to the left.

genre during the beginning of the seventeenth century, and religious paintings commissioned by Raja Man Singh at the beginning of the nineteenth century, portraiture was the preferred theme of Marwari rulers. It is more than likely that Marwar had a local painting tradition (as did Mewar) before its exposure to Mughal paintings; the early seventeenth century, however, saw a dramatic change in painting style and content, in keeping with Mughal taste. The gradual progress to decorative and stylized works in the eighteenth century degenerated into stiffly exaggerated forms epitomizing the final decline.

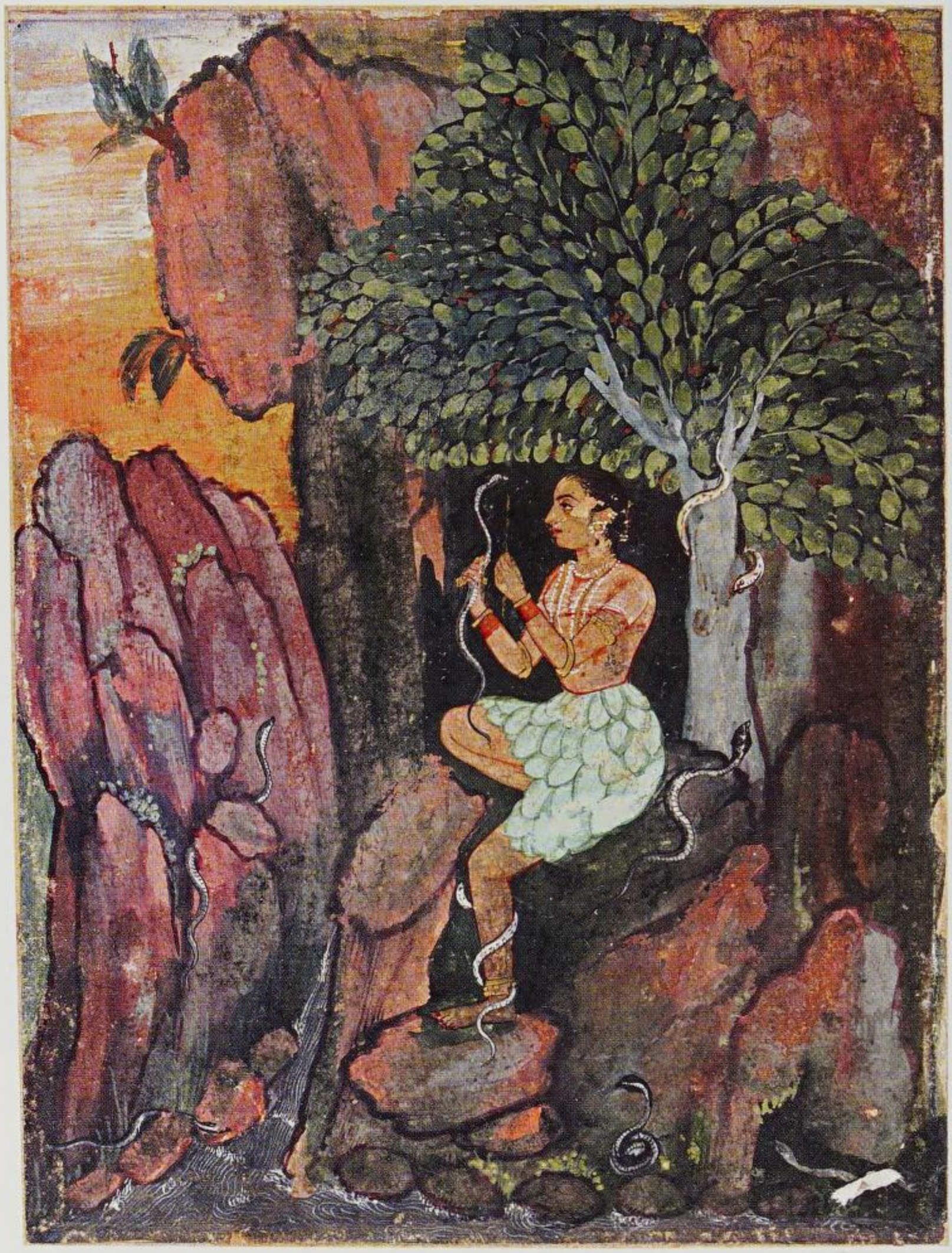
BIKANER

BIKANER WAS FOUNDED by Bikaji (son of Rao Jodha, founder of Jodhpur) of the Rathor clan, who proclaimed his independence from his parent state of Marwar in the fifteenth century and built a fort in the north-western region of Rajasthan, in the heart of the great desert of the Thar. The relationship between Bikaner and Marwar was, at best, unstable, leading to constant military activity by Marwar with the intention of dominating the smaller state of Bikaner. In 1539 Bikaner fort was captured by the Jodhpur army, and the Bikaner rulers were forced to forge an alliance with the Mughals, with whose help they won back their home and kingdom. The submission of Kalyan Mal (r. 1539–71) to Akbar in 1570 changed the history of this state completely, enabling peace and prosperity to flourish under the Mughal umbrella. Successive Bikaner rulers were great patrons of the arts and the Bikaner royal studio evolved into one of the largest and most organized of all Rajput ateliers.

Kalyan Mal's son Rai Singh (r. 1571–1611) laid the foundation of a long-lasting relationship between the House of Bikaner and the Mughals by forging a marriage alliance with Prince Salim (later Jahangir) in 1586. Despite being sent on extensive military campaigns benefiting the Mughals' rapid expansion of empire, Rai Singh, a Sanskrit scholar and cultured patron of the arts, found time to begin the beautification of the city of Bikaner. He was the first among a long line of Bikaner rulers who commanded Mughal forces in the Deccan from 1587 to 1592, and accompanied Prince Daniyal in 1593 in a military campaign against Ahmadnagar. It is well known that Bikaneri painting was strongly influenced by the luscious colours and compositions of Deccani paintings, which were brought home as booty for local artists to study and emulate. Rai Singh was the probable patron of an illustrated *Bhagavata Purana* manuscript (formerly in the Bikaner Palace collection, now dispersed; the Bikaner royal stamp appears on the versos of most of the folios), believed by scholars to be one of the earliest products of the Bikaner studio (fig. 57).[39] The paintings exhibit an odd mix of popular Mughal and early Rajput stylistic traits: while the figures derive from the popular Mughal idiom, the architecture and the blocks of bright background colours such as red, blue, green and yellow recall early Rajput painting. The considerable use of purple and lilac colours for borders, eaves and pillars is an influence of Deccani painting. A distinguishing feature of most paintings in this manuscript is that Krishna, coloured blue, is surrounded by a bright red background patch, an auspicious colour signifying his divine presence.

58. 'Portrait of Anup Singh', by Ali Reza. Bikaner, Rajasthan, 1660–65. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper. 20.6 x 11 cm. Lallgarh Palace Museum.

Rao Karan Singh (r. 1631–69), Rai Singh's grandson (given the title of Rao by Shah Jahan on his accession), was lauded in Bikaner and by all the Rajput princes for his defiance of Aurangzeb, the Mughal emperor. During the middle years of Karan Singh's reign Aurangzeb banned the arts, ordered the destruction of new Hindu temples and launched a zealous campaign of conversion to Islam. When Karan Singh heard rumours of Aurangzeb's treacherous plan to subjugate all Rajput princes serving in a campaign against the Afghans, he is known to have destroyed the boats that were sent by the emperor to fetch him and other Rajput princes across the Indus river for a meeting.[40] Rao Karan Singh led military campaigns for Shah Jahan in Daulatabad (1633) and against the Bijapuri ruler Adil Shah in 1636. Karan's son Raja Anup Singh (r. 1669–98) is associated with Aurangzeb's important battles in the Deccan, in particular the fall of Bijapur and the long siege of Golconda, and spent most of the later part of his career in the Deccan, as administrator of Aurangabad and governor of Adoni.



59. 'Asavari Ragini'. Folio from a *ragamala* series. Bikaner, Rajasthan, 1650. Opaque watercolour on paper. British Library.

'On the summit of the sandalwood mount, robed in the peacocks plumes, with a splendid necklace strung with pearls and ivory, the variegated one drawing to herself from the sandalwood tree the serpent – the proud one wears it as a bracelet, her body ablaze with dark splendour.'
K. Ebeling, *Ragamala Painting*, p. 126.

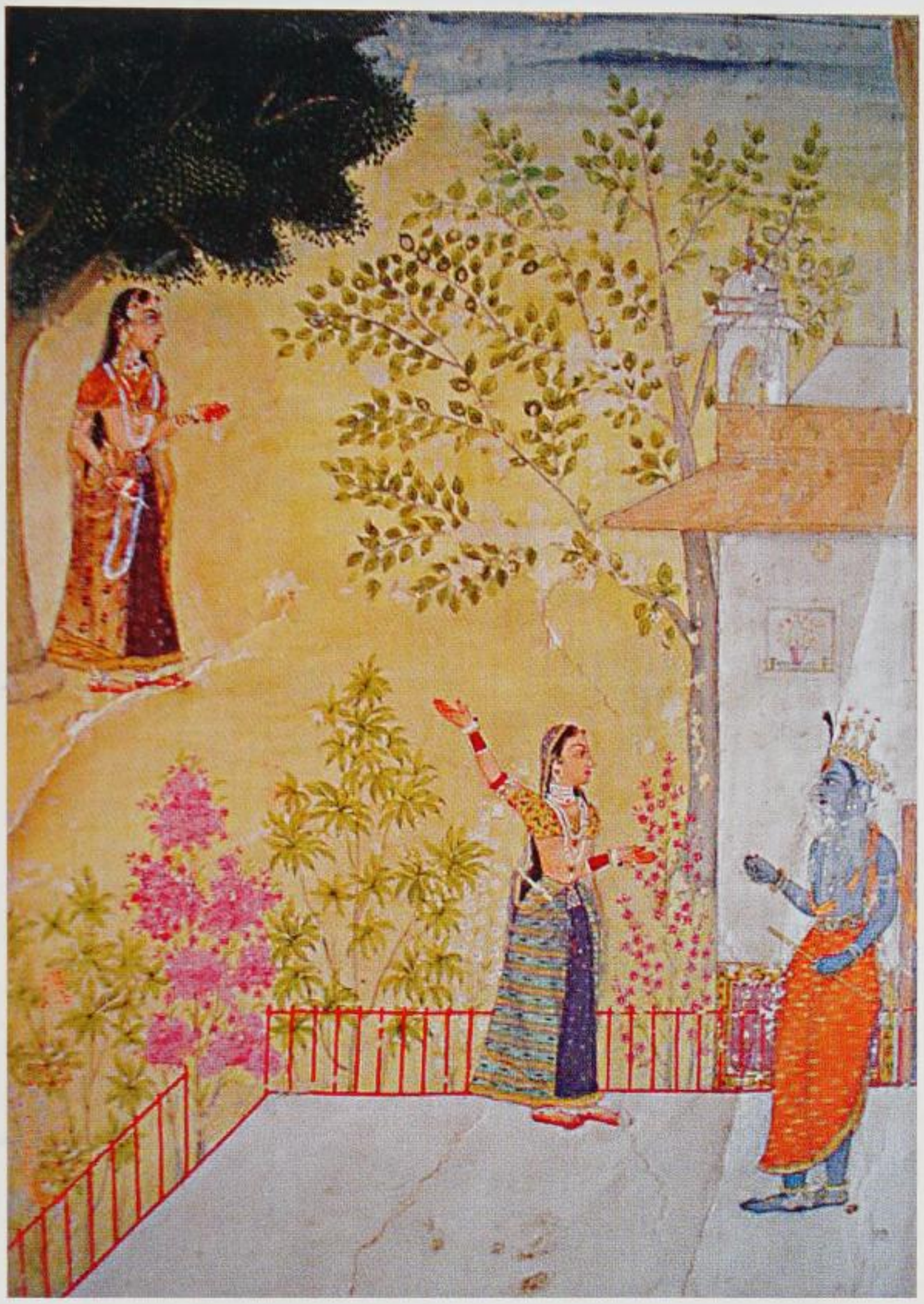
Karan Singh established an organized and active studio led by the master Ali Reza, from the Mughal atelier, who laid the foundations of the delicately nuanced and refined Bikaneri idiom.[41] A portrait of the young Anup Singh, Karan Singh's son, painted by Ali Reza (fig. 58) is in the Mughal Shah Jahan-period style; the palette, however, is brighter and the purple ties on his *jama* are painted with an exaggerated flair more in keeping with Deccani taste.

The figure of 'Asavari Ragini' (fig. 59) from a *ragamala* series, and the rocks on which she is seated, are heavily shaded along contours to impart volume, though already the Mughalized impact of Ali Reza's works is diluted towards a less refined style.[42] The rich colours of lilac and sea green indicate a Deccani

touch, ever present in early Bikaneri works; indeed, it can be said that, stylistically, Bikaner painting is a mix of Mughal and Deccani elements, and this blend can be seen in portraiture as well as paintings in the literary and classical genre. The music associated with Asavari Ragini originates from a snake charmer's melody and the painting usually depicts a tribal girl singing in order to charm snakes in the forest out of their habitats in sandalwood trees.

Raja Anup Singh was a great warrior and politician, a scholar of Sanskrit literature and patron of the arts, and one of the greatest kings of Bikaner.[43] He was given the title of Raja by Aurangzeb for his distinguished service in the Deccan. The Bikaner studio expanded during his reign by hiring a number of artists, possibly those who left the Mughal atelier prompted by Aurangzeb's clamp-down on the arts, or those who came from Deccani ateliers after the fall of Bijapur and Golconda. The Bikaner painting studio was one of the most organized of all Rajasthani studios of the time, with small groups of artists or *mandis* working directly under an *ustad* or master artist. Paintings were inscribed and dated with the names of artists and those of their fathers or masters, so that artist genealogies and styles may easily be traced.[44]

A folio from an inscribed *Rasikapriya* series (fig. 60) painted in the style of Ruknuddin, one of Anup Singh's leading artists, has delicate, elegant figures, pale colouring, a refined technique, and a harmonious, serene composition, all hallmarks of Ruknuddin's style.[45] That artist's idealized female figures generally have larger heads and shorter bodies, but this does not in any way detract from their charm. Women at leisure and *zenana* scenes were popular subjects in the last quarter of the seventeenth century at both Mughal and Rajasthani courts, and several paintings of these subjects have been drawn by the master.[46] Ruknuddin's treatment of figures and foliage is extremely similar to that of a Deccani artist called Rahim Deccani, who painted at Golconda in the



60. 'Radha's friend addresses Krishna'. Folio from a *Rasikapriya* series, in the style of Ruknuddin. Bikaner, Rajasthan, 1685. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper. Private collection.

'I know not who told her, and when, that Krishna unto my swing did hie:
She chews not betel leaves since then, nor water drinks, but fills her eyes
With tears: I die on you O friend, make haste to comfort her! O why
Go you not forth her grief to end, which on her heart does heavy lie?
For well I know she is a bud on passion's tree which long has lain,
And if perchance it withers up, alas! 'Twill never flower again!'

The *Rasikapriya* of Keshavdas, translated by K.P. Bahadur, p. 79.

61. 'Mirza Raja Jai Singh and Kishan Singh of Amber', by Ruknuddin (as stated in an inscription in Nagari on the reverse). Bikaner, Rajasthan, 1670. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 22.6 x 14.9 cm. British Library.

62 (*opposite*). 'Vasanta Ragini'. Folio from a *ragamala* series. Bikaner, Rajasthan, 1690. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 21 x 14 cm. British Museum.

The inscription on the painting says 'Basant'. A lord and companion walking through the forest is a rare iconographical representation of Vasanta Ragini.

third quarter of the seventeenth century, though the relationship between the two artists and their similar styles have not, as yet, been explored.[47]

Ruknuddin was also an accomplished painter of portraits. A sensitive double-portrait of Mirza Raja Jai Singh I (r. 1621–67) of Amber and his grandson Kishan Singh has all the refined elements of an imperial Mughal painting (fig. 61).[48] The painting was either commissioned as a ceremonial gift,

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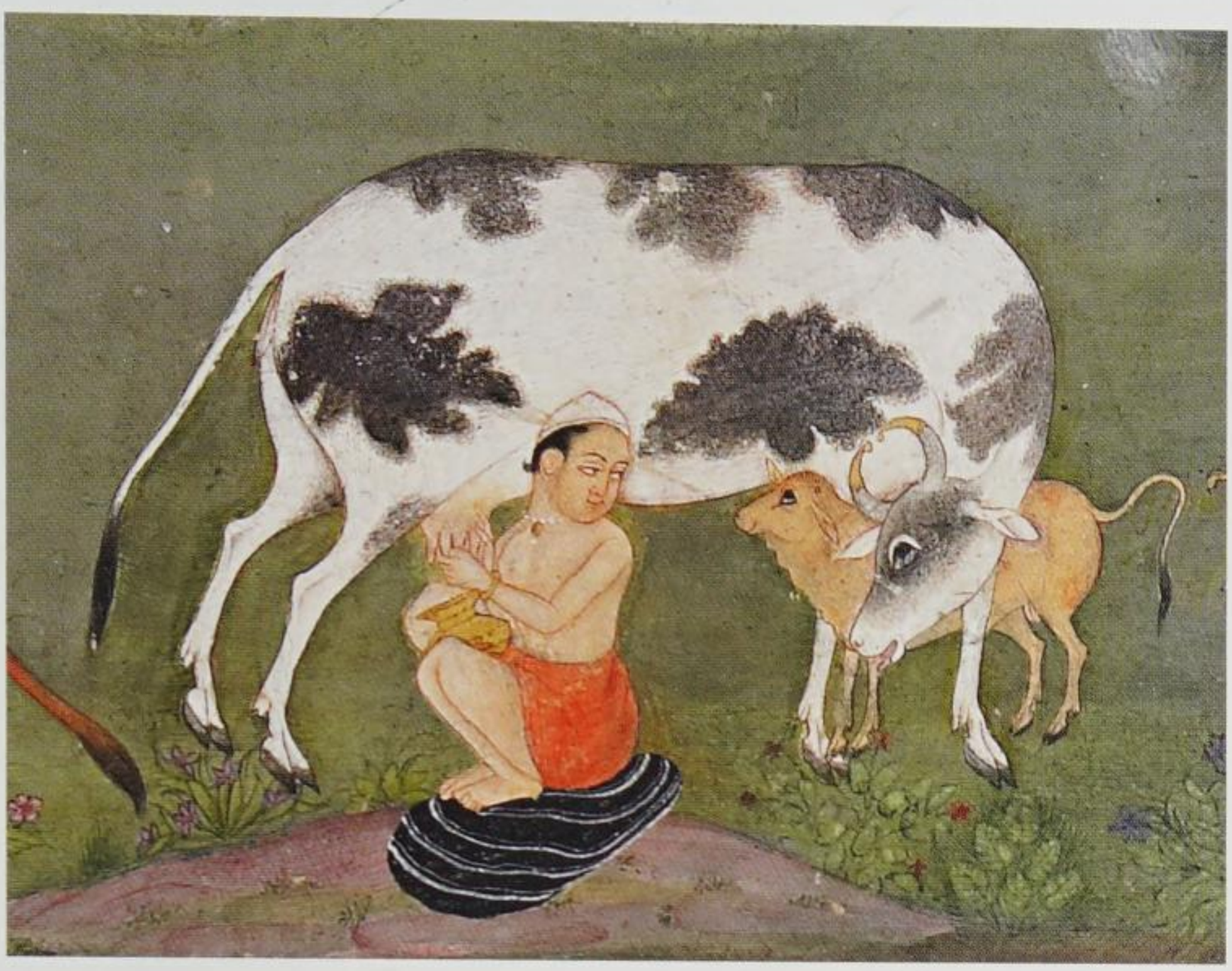
63 (*above and detail opposite*). 'Krishna lifts Mount Govardhana', by Ustad Sahibdin. Folio from a *Bhagavata Purana* manuscript (part 1, Book 10, ch. 25). Bikaner, Rajasthan, 1690. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 22 x 30.6 cm. British Museum.

Indra, the Vedic god of thunder, sends forth a deluge as the villagers worship Mount Govardhana instead of him. Krishna lifts Mount Govardhana for seven days and nights to protect the village from the deluge.

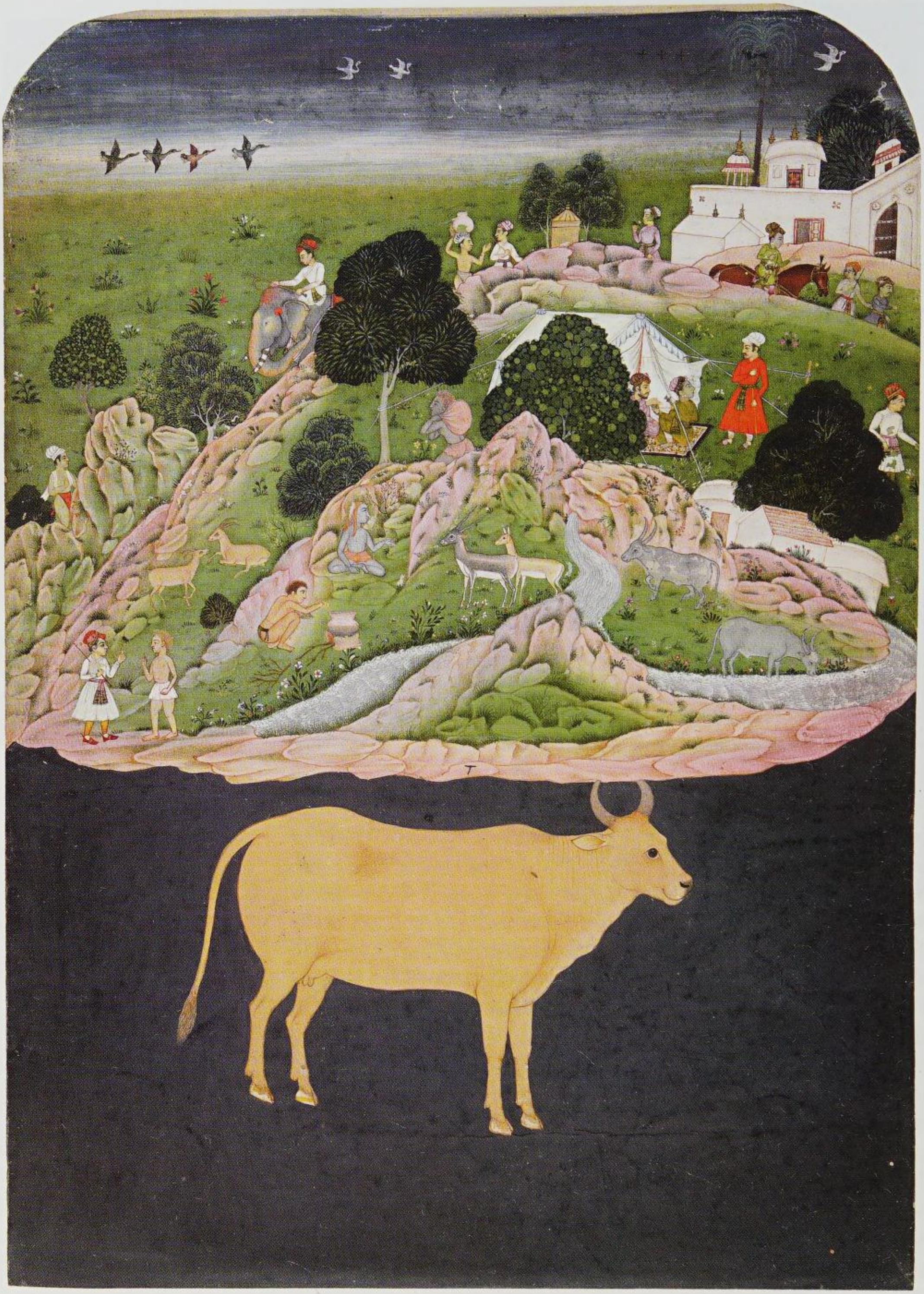
or *nazar*, from Anup Singh to the Mirza Raja, or commissioned as part of an album of contemporary portraits of important personalities, in emulation of a Mughal tradition started by Akbar. The positioning of both figures, right down to their hands, is identical to that in another portrait of Mirza Raja Jai Singh I with his son Ram Singh I in the Chester Beatty Library.[49] In the latter portrait, under Amber patronage, Raja Jai Singh is younger and presents a *sarpech* (a jewelled turban ornament) to his son, whose hands move forward as if to receive the gift. Fig. 61 could be a copy of the composition of the earlier Chester Beatty painting of 1645–50, with Ruknuddin having replaced the figures with an older Raja Jai Singh and his grandson Kishan Singh. Kishan Singh can be identified by his sharp facial features, in particular his nose, seen in a portrait of him riding an elephant.[50]

'Vasanta Ragini' (fig. 62) is in the style of Ruknuddin but is painted by another artist; the delicate, scantily modelled figures and landscape incline towards a stylization that is to follow.[51] 'Krishna lifting Mount Govardhana' (fig. 63), from the *Bhagavata Purana*, was painted by the Ustad Sahibdin and heralds the painting style of the eighteenth century at Bikaner. The charm-



ingly naive and delicate figures, the landscape, and the black, swirling thunderclouds are stylized compared with earlier works. Influences from the Deccan, this time from Golconda, are once again pronounced. The tiny figure of the cow giving birth to a calf, the other cows, the *gopas* (Krishna's cowherd companions) and the lilac rock-like formation that is Mount Govardhana have been copied from a painting entitled 'Animals and ascetics in a landscape' from Golconda.[52] The lithe figure of Krishna, bejewelled and crowned, stands on a bed of lotuses holding Govardhana aloft while adoring maidens hold royal emblems of flywhisks and banners, signifying that Krishna, though a simple cowherd, is indeed a king among kings, greater even than the mighty Indra who had ordered the black swirling thunderclouds to play havoc in the lives of those who had not acknowledged his supremacy. Other paintings from this *Bhagavata* series, probably by the same artist, are in the Goenka collection.[53] The spirit of the *Bhagavata* has been captured brilliantly in one of the most remarkable of all Rajput paintings.

Raja Sujan Singh (r. 1700–36) ascended the throne of Bikaner at the age of ten and had his fair share of problems during the troubled times following the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, when five Mughal emperors ruled in quick succession for a period of twenty-two years, and uncertainty and intrigues were the order of the day. 'A cow carrying the earth on her horns' (fig. 64) depicts diminutive figures amid a stylized landscape. The change from Mughal-inspired forms to increasing stylization follows the trend of painting in Marwar and Jaipur in the beginning of the eighteenth century and perhaps



reflects the increasing independence of these states from the Mughal courts, which by now were in turmoil.

Gaj Singh (r. 1745–1787) was a great patron of art and an astute ruler who chose to stay in Bikaner and consolidate his kingdom rather than attend the Mughal court, which by now was crumbling. 'Dalel Singh hunting at Gajner' (fig. 65) is a bold evocation of a boar hunt from the rooftop of the Gajner hunting lodge, which was built on an artificial lake for the maharaja's hunting pleasures. The coarse line, multiple perspectives and absurd figural proportions to architecture and landscape may indicate a decline in painting standards at Bikaner. On the other hand the style could merely be echoing the spirit of early Rajput painting, in which naturalism and perspective were not important. Indeed, the trend of eighteenth-century Rajasthani works lies in increased stylization and decoration rather than realism. Fig. 65 is nevertheless a quaint and charmingly bold rendition of painting at Bikaner in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

A painting from the early nineteenth century, in the Bellak collection at Philadelphia, exhibits crisper lines, a restrained ethos and a high artistic standard;[54] others, however, are slacker in line, in keeping with fig. 65. Bikaneri painting petered away by the mid-nineteenth century when the trend of portrait photography was embraced wholeheartedly by the Bikaner rulers.

64 (*opposite*). 'A cow carrying the earth on her horns'. Bikaner, Rajasthan, 1700–20. Opaque watercolour on paper, 30 x 21.4 cm. British Museum.

One cannot be sure of the subject matter of this painting, but it may represent Aditi, a Vedic mother goddess who embodies the vastness of the universe, symbolized by a cow. She is the mother of the three worlds: heaven, earth and the underworld. This illustration depicts her carrying the earth on her horns.

65. 'Dalel Singh hunting at Gajner'. Bikaner, Rajasthan, last quarter of the eighteenth century. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 23.6 x 35.2 cm. British Museum.

66 (*opposite*). 'Raja Raj Singh', in the style of Bhavanidas. Kishangarh, Rajasthan, 1725. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 21.8 x 15.4 cm. British Museum.

KISHANGARH

KISHANGARH, a small state situated between Jodhpur and Jaipur and near Ajmer, the Mughal centre of rule in Rajasthan, was founded in 1609 by Kishan Singh (r. 1609–15) of the Rathor clan. The Kishangarh rulers were close to the Mughals and commanded *mansabs* under successive Mughal emperors throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Rup Singh (r. 1643–58), founder of the city of Rupnagar in Kishangarh, is known to have established the image of Kalyan Rai (an aspect of Krishna imbued with sanctity by Vitthalnath, son of Vallabhacharya) as the real authority in the state, under whose guidance he and all succeeding rulers governed.[55] Since then Kishangarh rulers have been inspired by religious devotion towards the Vallabhacharya sect.

Patronage of paintings at Kishangarh probably began under Raja Man Singh (r. 1658–1706) in the Mughal style of Aurangzeb-period painting, as some early paintings that could be mistaken for Mughal works have long been held to have been painted at the Kishangarh court by a Mughal-trained artist.[56] Kishangarh painting developed a distinctive style under the guidance of the artist Bhavanidas, who was previously attached to the Mughal court and was later patronized by Raja Raj Singh of Kishangarh (r. 1706–48). A Mughal painting of Aurangzeb receiving his eldest son, Prince Muʿazzam, later known as Bahadur Shah (r. 1707–12), has been attributed by Linda Leach to Bhavanidas and provides a record of his artistic abilities and the current Mughal style.[57] The portraits of Aurangzeb and his sons and courtiers are technically perfect, though stylized and stiffer than earlier Mughal works, and the use of gold as an outline imparts a hard-edged look. Bhavanidas is said to have started painting at Kishangarh in 1719, followed by his son Dalchand and nephew Kalyandas in 1725/6. Portraiture in Raj Singh's reign developed from early simplified drawings to works set in landscapes and palace courtyards, some of which can be recognized as local Kishangarh scenes. Besides portraits, other themes grew into distinctive genres, such as paintings relating to the Vaishnava tradition, satires, hunts, and pictures of horses. Bhavanidas is credited with originating all these genres at Kishangarh, and his influence should not be underestimated.[58]

In the sensitive portrait of Raj Singh visiting his queen in the *zenana* (fig. 66), the Mughal-inspired faces of the ladies and the heavy use of gold around Raj Singh's halo and *jama*, the ladies' veils and the bridle and reins of the horse are all typical traits of Bhavanidas's style.[59] A slight arching of the backs of both rider and horse is discernible; this was to be carried to exaggerated lengths in later Kishangarh painting. The horse, with delicately painted mane, has *zafar* (victory) branded on its hennaed body, a mark of the Mughal and Rajput custom of naming and branding horses.[60] Raj Singh offering a posy to his beloved, and the tree, lush with ripe hanging mangoes, heighten the erotic

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sentiment in the painting. Indeed, were it not for the nimbus signifying royalty and the inscription of Raj Singh's name on the reverse, fig. 66 could be mistaken for a romantic painting of a literary subject. The palace at Kishangarh was situated on the shores of Lake Gundalao, and the approach to the *zenana* could have been from the shores of the lake itself, hence the unusual feature of the raja's approach through ankle-deep water.[61]

A portrait of Kunwar Fateh Singh of Fatehgarh (fig. 67), Raj Singh's son, who died relatively early, is in the style of Dalchand, Bhavanidas's son, who was active at the court of Maharaja Abhai Singh of Jodhpur (r. 1724–49) as well as at the Kishangarh court.[62] The time periods of Dalchand's service at Jodhpur and Kishangarh are not clear, and he may have travelled back and forth between the two courts. Though Fateh Singh founded the fief of Fatehgarh, an inscription on the reverse of the portrait indicates that it was painted at Rupnagar. Orange streaks of the setting sun and rolling vistas leading to the diminutively drawn city of Rupnagar in the distance, are traits of Mughal painting in the court of Muhammad Shah, indicating Dalchand's training at the Mughal court.[63] This portrait may have been painted in his style by an apprentice.

The Krishna/Radha paintings for which Kishangarh is justly famous were painted by the artist Nihalchand and commissioned by Raja Savant Singh (r. 1748–64), Raj Singh's son and heir, when he was still a prince. Raja Savant Singh was, like his father, a literary and cultured prince and a great devotee of Krishna. He was also an artist and a talented poet and composed poetry under the pseudonym Nagaridas. The atmosphere of a highly cultured court, in which poetry, literature and the arts were encouraged, may have influenced Savant Singh's poetical tendencies, for it is as a prince at court that he composed one of his well-known works, the *Manorath Manjari*, completed in 1723. His principal artist, Nihalchand, painted in an extremely lyrical and sensuous, though exaggeratedly stylized, manner. Nihalchand may have started painting around 1730. His *œuvre* speaks primarily of devout Krishna *bhakti* and his paintings are resonant with *sringara rasa* of the devotional type. His works include stunning panoramic landscapes receding into the distance with brilliant orange and grey sunsets; lakes with blossoming lotus flowers on which glide elegant boats, with the seated Krishna and Radha being serenaded by flower-laden *gopis*; or Krishna and Radha as the archetypal lovers, looking into each other's eyes in lush forest glades, or as royalty in palatial white marble courtyard settings surrounded by dense tropical groves. The ethereal settings of these paintings seem to be inspired by a vision of the divine couple in a heavenly paradise, the epitome of an idyllic world.[64] It is not surprising that some of Savant Singh's verses have been inscribed on the reverse of such works, as this vision may have been inspired by the patron and executed by the artist, a testament to the rapport that perhaps existed between them.

Eric Dickinson and Karl Khandalavala have related the delicate, elongated, highly stylized features of Radha in Kishangarh painting to those of Savant

67. 'Kunwar Fateh Singh of Fatehgarh', in the style of Dalchand. Kishangarh, Rajasthan, 1745. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper. 26.7 x 18 cm. British Museum.

Singh's mistress, Bani Thani,[65] but this is speculative. Haidar suggests that the stylized Kishangarh eye, a prominent feature of Krishna and Radha in Kishangarh *bhakti* paintings, may have been inspired by the eyes of Kalyan Rai, the presiding deity. Hindus believe that a sacred image in a temple is imbued with life after its ritual installation. The deity's eyes are carved or painted last in the installation ceremony and it is this important ritual that breathes life into the image. The eyes of a sacred icon or image are therefore

68. 'Lady and a crane', in the style of Nihalchand. Kishangarh, Rajasthan, 1750. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 14.3 x 8 cm. British Museum.

the most important part of its physical form. Kishangarh's rulers may have considered it appropriate to superimpose the exaggerated eyes of the deity onto images of Krishna and Radha in their religious paintings.[66]

Nihalchand's Kishangarh feminine ideal is easily recognizable: an elongated face with receding forehead, highly stylized eyes in an excessively slanted curve, arched eyebrows, sharply pointed nose and chin, and refined ruby red lips accompanied by a slim elongated form (fig. 68). The sensitive painting of a disconsolate heroine singing songs of unrequited love to her companion, a crane, could be from a poetical or literary series depicting heroes and heroines (*nayaka-nayika bheda*) and is in the style of Nihalchand, though not by the master himself.

Savant Singh was the rightful heir to the throne of Kishangarh, but on his father's death, his brother, Bahadur Singh, usurped the throne, and it was not until 1755, with the help of the Marathas, that Savant Singh managed to regain control of part of Kishangarh state, which he was forced to share with his brother. He abdicated soon after, in 1757, in favour of his son Sardar Singh (r. 1757–66), who ruled from Rupnagar, as Savant Singh wished to spend the rest of his life in loving devotion to Krishna at Vrindavana. The devoted Bani Thani accompanied him.

69. 'Lady at a *jharokha* window'. Kishangarh, Rajasthan, 1790. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper. 17.8 x 13.5 cm. British Museum.

Sardar Singh died without an heir in 1766 and Bahadur Singh's son was installed at Rupnagar. After Bahadur Singh's death his son Birad Singh (r. 1781–8) inherited the integrated Kishangarh and Rupnagar areas as one, and ruled over the entire state of Kishangarh. A decline in political fortunes during the reign of Kalyan Singh (r. 1797–1832) led to British protection of the Kishangarh state in 1818. Painting continued in a progressively degenerate version of Nihalchand's style until the end of the eighteenth century. The decline is evident in fig. 69, a copy of the ideal female Kishangarh face, in which the line has assumed a harder edge and the sensuality and refinement of the past have become an aberration.

CHAPTER FIVE

Central India

MALWA

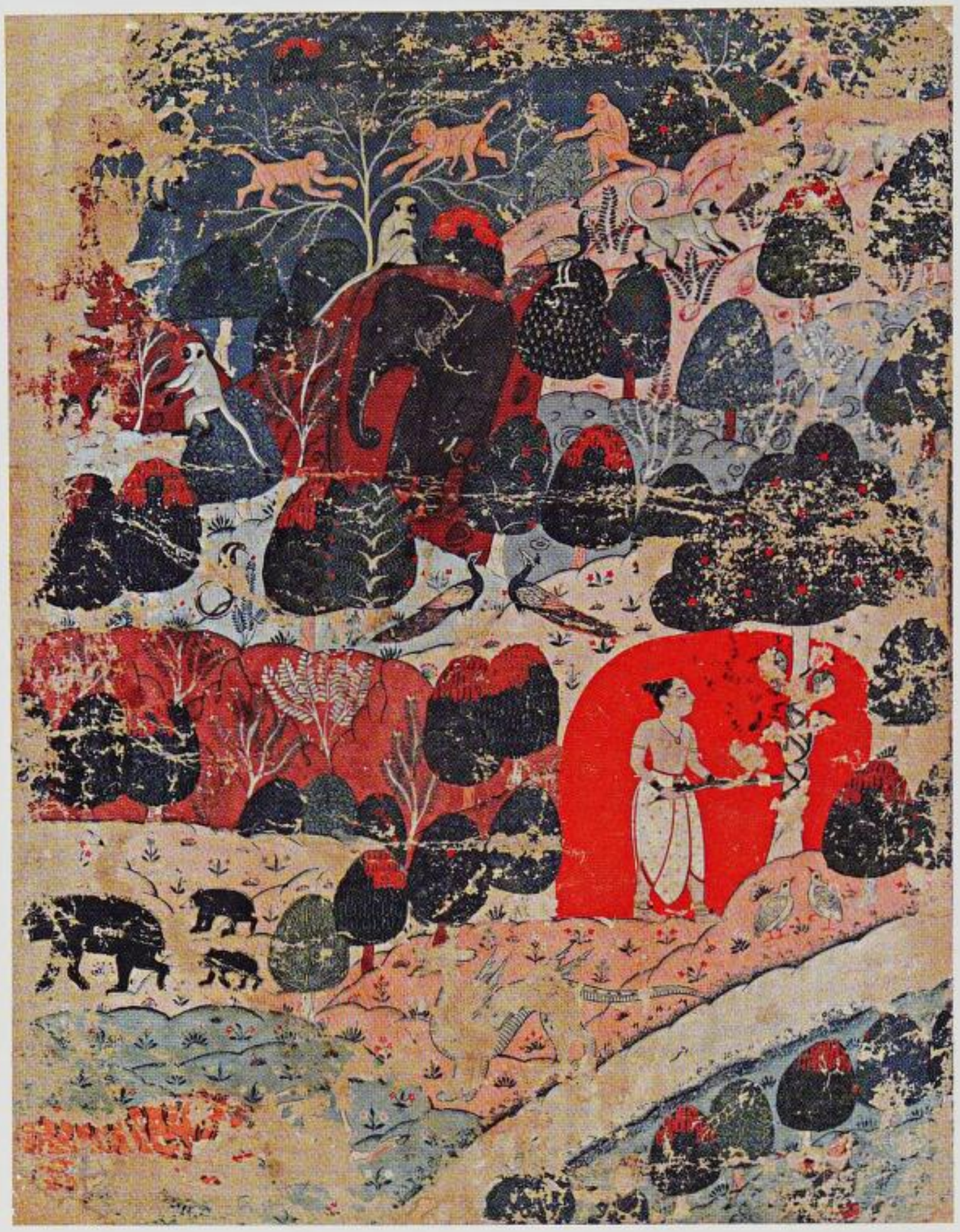
MALWA LIES AT the heart of the Indian peninsula and contains monumental treasures from India's cultural past: the Buddhist stupas at Sanchi and Bharhut, the painted caves at Bagh and the Gupta temples at Udaigiri, to name but a few. The medieval period in Malwa's history was extremely fractured and war torn, a fact that has perhaps led to the enigma surrounding paintings attributed to this region. Overrun at first by the Sultans of Delhi (fourteenth century), then ruled by the Khilji Sultans (1405–1555) and finally succumbing to the Mughals (when Akbar ousted the music-loving hedonist Baz Bahadur from Mandu in 1561), Malwa was dominated by Islamic rulers, and Mandu, its capital, was established as an important outpost of the Mughal empire en route to the Deccan.

Certain paintings in a primitive Rajput style were at first attributed by Ananda Coomaraswamy to Bundelkhand, Malwa's neighbour, as many of them were discovered in the Datia palace at Bundelkhand, and a *Ramayana* of 1640 in a similar style was possibly commissioned by Hira De, Queen of Orchha (also in Bundelkhand).[1] Murals from Bundelkhand's cities, Datia and Orchha, however, were painted in a highly Mughalized manner with no trace of the folkish elements dominating the Orchha *Ramayana* or the primitives; hence the attribution to Bundelkhand did not hold. Karl Khandalavala attributed the primitives to Narsinghgarh in Malwa, based on an inscription attached to a dated series in this style giving the place of production as Narsyang sahar.[2] Although this identification is tenuous, Malwa has generally been accepted as the provenance of paintings in this primitive Rajput style. The question of patronage is another unresolved factor in Malwa paintings; Anand Krishna suggests that the Malwa style may have been the work of itinerant artists painting for wealthy Hindu patrons, as the main subjects of Malwa painting are from the Hindu classical tradition. He also suggests that paintings in this style probably covered a much larger area than the geographical limits of the Malwa region.[3]

The amalgamation of Hindu and Islamic ideas in architecture and book illustration during the Sultanate period directly influenced the style of Malwa painting. We have already seen in the chapter on Early Rajput painting how

70 (*opposite*). 'Bhairavi Ragini'. Folio from a *ragamala* series. Malwa, Central India, 1670. Opaque watercolour on paper, 18 x 13.1 cm. British Museum.

'*Ragini Bhairavi* of *Bhairon* (*Bhairava*): With great ecstasy, to Shiva, the god of gods, / Who carries serpents on his head, / *Bhairavi* renders her devotion / On the banks of Lake Manasarovara.' O.C. Gangoly, *Ragas and Raginis*, II, pl. VI.



71. 'Asavari Ragini'. Folio from a *ragamala* series. Malwa, Central India, 1680. Opaque watercolour on paper, 35.5 x 27.8 cm. British Museum.

indigenous elements were incorporated into Sultanate works such as the *Ni'matnama* manuscript painted at Mandu (fig. 23). An illustrated manuscript of the *Laur Chanda* (1525–75), a poem made famous by Mulla Daud at the court of Sultan Firuz Shah Tughluq of Delhi, had a direct influence on Malwa painting, which incorporated the horizontal registers, Tughluq domes, simple figural outlines and transparent *jamas* and trees in the earliest of its works.[4] A *Rasikapriya* series dated 1634 contains the earliest paintings by which the Malwa style can be identified, and the mature style indicates a well-established tradition. The blocks of primary colours in the background, interest in textile patterns, and wavy sky demarcated by a white cloud band are features of the Early Rajput style. The poet Keshavdas's *Rasikapriya* verses (composed at the nearby court of Orchha) are inscribed on yellow bands above and below the paintings, a primitive device seen in Mewar works. Malwa painting was therefore a blend of Sultanate and Early Rajput styles.

The Hira De *Ramayana* (1640) was commissioned for Hira Rani, who may be identified with the historical Hira De, wife of Raja Pahar Singh of Orchha (r. 1640–42); the manuscript represents the next stage in the evolution of the Malwa style. Easily distinguishable as a stylistic continuation of the 1634 *Rasikapriya*, the abstract compositions of the *Ramayana* are, however, more complex, with figures cleverly arranged, the main event taking centre stage, and other figures, trees and architecture balancing it. They are also more refined than the earlier *Rasikapriya* images, perhaps because they were commissioned at a court.[5]

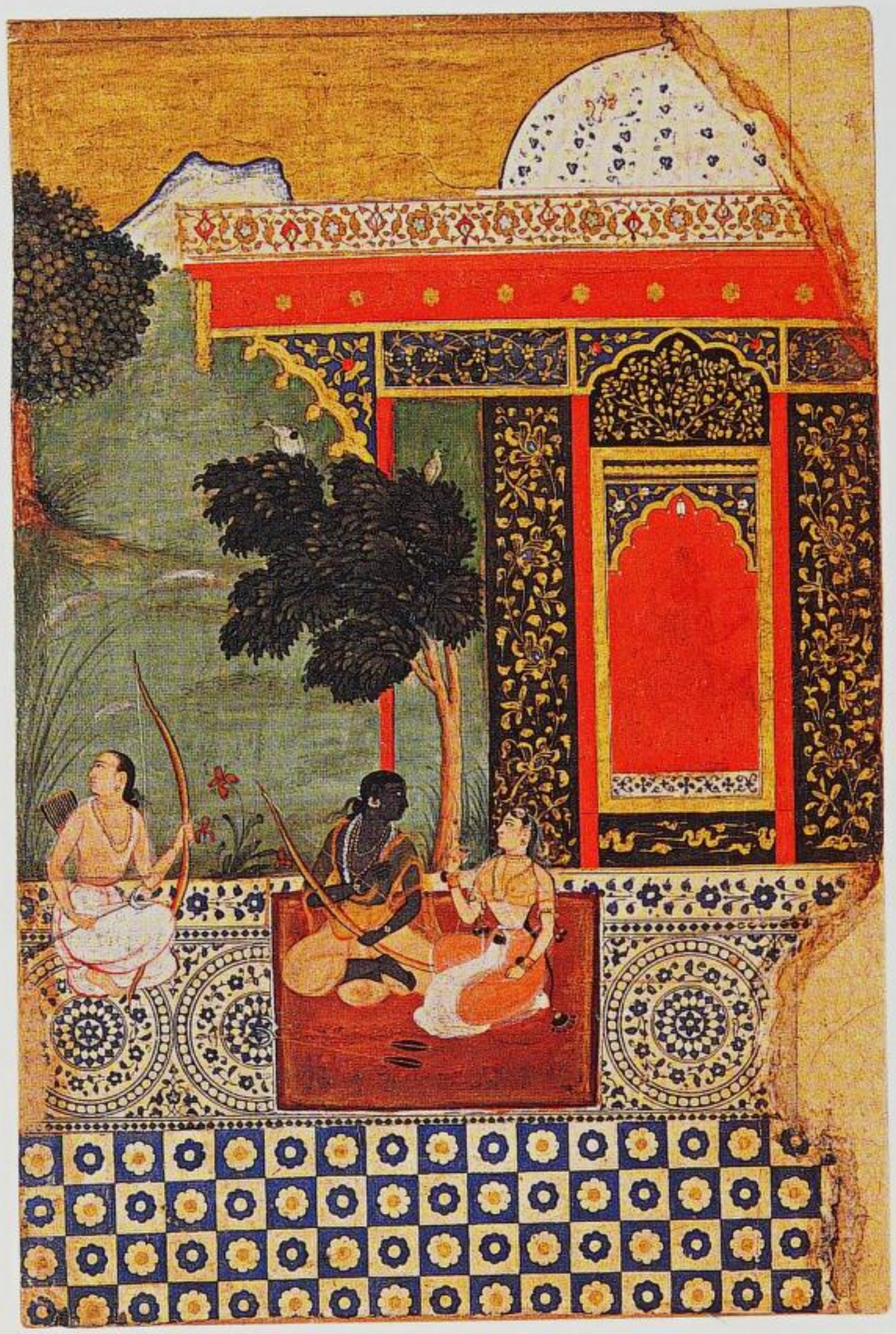
'Bhairavi Ragini' (fig. 70) is a continuation of the early Malwa style, though figures are now taller and express movement, exuberant creepers have been added onto trees and the trees themselves sway to the rhythms of the musical instruments energetically played by Bhairavi's companions.[6] The architectural pavilion has a complex form with structures piled on top of the base and cusped arches depicting brilliant red interiors, an evolution from the folkish simplicity of the 1634 *Rasikapriya* illustrations, and a possible influence of Mughal painting.

This integral structure continues throughout the seventeenth century in various *ragamala* and *amaru sataka* series, with additions of scrolling arabesque

72. 'The *gopis* searching for Krishna'. Folio from a *Bhagavata Purana* manuscript. Malwa, Central India, 1690–1700. Opaque watercolour on paper, 18 x 35.2 cm. British Museum.

bands at the bottom of the page and increasingly refined architectural, landscape and figural forms.[7] Closely adhering to ancient conventions of Hindu creativity in which emotion and sentiment rather than any form of naturalism or illusion are prominent, Malwa painting is by far the most rigidly conservative of all the Rajput schools, and 'Asavari Ragini' (fig. 71), from an exceptionally large *ragamala* series, appears as a breath of fresh air in this tradition. The painting has a complex composition of trees in variegated shapes, landscape in shades of pink and brown, and all manner of creatures occupying the forest in which the lonely Asavari sings her melancholy tune to tempt the snakes from the sandalwood trees. An elephant, snakes, peacocks, bears, monkeys, baboons, birds and the outline of a dragon are visible in this astonishing rendering of nature in a luxuriant landscape setting. The animals are shaded in a realistic manner and they express a range of movement probably derived from the Mughal aesthetic. The red flat plane of colour behind the main figure, an obsolete device, still persists.[8]

An illustration to a *Bhagavata Purana* series (fig. 72) drawn in horizontal registers with quaint, stunted *gopis* searching for Krishna marks the last phase of the Malwa style and is a marked decline reverting back to anachronistic devices of Jain and early Rajput painting. The last paintings in the Malwa style date to around 1700 after which it disappears, a phenomenon as puzzling as its origins and provenance. The decline of painting during Aurangzeb's reign and the diminished economies of the Mughal empire in the eighteenth century, together with the rise of the Marathas, may be possible reasons.



73. 'Rama, Sita and Lakshmana in Panchavati'. Folio from a *Ramayana* manuscript (Book 3, *Aranyakanda*, ch. 15). Bundelkhand, Central India, 1610. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 28.8 x 19.1 cm. Howard Hodgkin Collection.

BUNDELKHAND

Orchha and Datia, the principal cities of Bundelkhand, lie due south of Agra, close to the Mughal court, a factor that may have influenced their Mughalized painting style. The Bundelas claim descent from the solar race of Rajputs and the Gaharwar clan originating in Benaras. The town of Orchha was founded in 1531 and became the capital of the Bundela principality. Madhukar Shah (r. 1554–92), a spirited Bundela chieftain, rose to prominence by expanding Bundelkhand's territory until Akbar's formidable power forced him to accept Mughal suzerainty in 1578. The Bundela rajas were devout Vaishnavites and, beginning with Madhukar Shah, great patrons of architecture. The Raja Mahal (king's palace) built by Madhukar Shah at Orchha is decorated with an astonishing number of murals from the Hindu classical tradition in a popular Mughal idiom. No manuscripts or paintings on paper are attributed to his reign, but this may be because the study of Bundelkhand's art has so far not been given the scholarly attention it deserves.

Madhukar Shah's son, Bir Singh Deo Bundela, propelled Bundelkhand to the zenith of its power under the Mughals.[9] Bir Singh Deo befriended the rebel prince Salim (later Jahangir) at Allahabad during Akbar's reign and arranged for the murder of Abu'l Fazl, Akbar's prominent courtier and biographer, at Jahangir's request. Jahangir rewarded Bir Singh for this dastardly act and proclaimed him Raja of Bundelkhand when the former became emperor in 1605, while Ram Shah, the heir to Bundelkhand's throne, was given the small fief of Chanderi. Bir Singh Deo and his sons were loyal protégés of Jahangir and campaigned for the Mughals in Mewar, Kabul, Kandahar and the Deccan.

Raja Bir Singh was a great patron of art and architecture and is credited with building the palaces at Datia and Orchha, the Lakhshmi Narayana and Chaturbhuj temple at Orchha, the Keshav Deo temple at Mathura, the Bundela Mahal and Bundela Bag at Agra, and many Shaiva temples, mansions and tanks. The construction of the Jahangiri Mahal had begun before Jahangir came to Orchha to personally attend Bir Singh's coronation. Murals from the epics and *Puranas* in the Jahangiri Mahal and the Lakshminarayan temple at Orchha are in a robust popular Mughal style,[10] while floral and geometric

designs on the walls and ceiling of the Veer Singh Mahal at Datia are more refined.[11] Apart from a damaged sub-imperial illustrated *Ramayana* manuscript, no other paintings have so far been attributed to this patron, though it seems inconceivable that paintings should not have kept pace with his grand building schemes. The Sanskrit text on the reverse of fig. 73, a folio from the damaged *Ramayana* series, Bundeli dialect on the reverse of some paintings from this series, as well as the Datia Palace seal, have all been reasons for the attribution of this series to Bundelkhand.[12] The artist's interest in the use of gold and decorative design on the walls and floors of this painting compares with that on some of the murals in the Veer Singh Mahal at Datia. Seyller has discovered that some of the artists of this *Ramayana* were in Akbar's service until 1600 but disappeared from his studio soon after, and it is possible they were retained at Datia.

74. 'Rao Satrujit of Datia'. Bundelkhand, Central India, 1770–80. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 24.5 x 18.7 cm. British Museum.

Bir Singh's successors of the seventeenth century did not have the power or ability to emulate their predecessor's artistic patronage. By the mid-eighteenth century Bundelkhand was besieged by Maratha chieftains who extracted large sums of money and laid the land to waste. A brief revival of painting took place towards the end of the eighteenth century under Rao Satrujit of Datia (r. 1762–1801), the sixth ruler to the throne of Datia and an enthusiastic patron of the arts. A great warrior who managed to consolidate his territories by battling the Jats and Marathas, he is known to have commissioned various paintings in the Hindu classical tradition and a number of portraits.[13] He was killed while fighting the forces of the Maratha chieftain, Daulat Rao Scindia. 'Rao Satrujit of Datia' (fig. 74) depicts his tall, proud bearing as he sits astride a magnificent horse. The flat, oddly shaped turban with feathered jewel ornament, diaphanous muslin *jama*, fitted trousers and a voluminous *patka*, or sash – the costume of the Bundelkhand rajas – are seen in all his portraits. The style is refined and in keeping with Mughal taste. Unfortunately the stylistic evolution of Bundelkandi paintings cannot be traced further owing to a lack of scholarly research on the subject.

CHAPTER SIX

Pahari Painting

RAJPUT PAINTINGS from the foothills of the western Himalaya, known as Pahari paintings (*pahari* means 'from the mountains'), include some of the most dynamic and lyrical of all works in the Rajput tradition. This mountainous region, formerly known as the 'Punjab Hill States', is watered by the five rivers of the Punjab. In modern India it comprises parts of the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal. The dramatic topography of majestic mountains, secluded valleys, gushing streams and verdant flora inspired local artists to create some of the most delightful landscapes in Indian painting. These landscapes, however, were never painted as a means of artistic expression alone, as in European painting; rather, they were symbolic and served to capture the mood or emotion of the scene portrayed. Even when panoramic mountainous vistas were realistically captured by later Pahari artists, the need to imbue nature with the emotion or symbolism inherent in the painting persisted. For example, in a *Ramayana* painting depicting the heroes and heroine, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, resting in the forest, the trees overhead would seemingly bend their branches and spread their foliage to protect them; or a painting of Sita being kidnapped by the demon Ravana would depict trees shrinking back in horror and dismay.

Portraits and literary, poetical and mythical themes were extensively patronized by hill chieftains in emulation of their Rajput cousins who ruled in the plains of Rajasthan and central India, and the dominant themes of divine and romantic love were also featured in a similar spirit. The *Rasamanjari*, composed by Bhanudatta in the fifteenth century, was the most popular poem illustrated in the Pahari region. A large number of temples dedicated to Shiva and Devi, along with many paintings of these deities, affirm their popularity in the hill states, so that paintings of Krishna do not altogether dominate Pahari paintings as they do in the plains. Krishna and Rama became popular in the mid-seventeenth century with the influence of Vaishnava *bhakti* from the plains.

Hindu Rajput rulers of the Pahari states belonged to ancient clans from the plains of central India, Rajasthan and Bengal. These adventurers had travelled north, subjugating smaller hill *ranas* and *thakurs* (chieftains) and

75 (*opposite*). 'Krishna kills Kansa'. Folio from a *Bhagavata Purana* manuscript (part 1, Book 10, ch. 44). Mankot, Punjab hills, 1700–10. 28.3 x 20.3 cm. British Museum.

Vishnu incarnates on earth as Krishna in order to kill the evil king Kansa. This climactic scene from the *Bhagavata Purana* depicts the blue-bodied Krishna about to kill Kansa with an elephant tusk removed from a mad elephant that he and his half-brother Balarama (coloured white) have just killed.

carving out minor principalities for themselves, from the seventh century onwards. The artistic heritage of this region before the advent of the Mughals is rich in Buddhist and Hindu monuments containing sacred sculpture, but there is no evidence of a tradition of miniature painting until the mid-sixteenth century. Muslim invasions prior to the Mughal influx had little impact on this isolated region until Akbar's subjugation of the major hill states and the subsequent capture of Kangra fort by Jahangir in 1620. Apart from retaining relatives of hill chieftains at the imperial Mughal court, Akbar did not interfere with their internal administration, which remained relatively uninfluenced by the foreign imposition. Hill chieftains returning from the Mughal court, however, must have been inspired to hire artists and have their portraits painted, as several portraits of rulers from the hill states of Mandi, Nurpur, Bilaspur and Chamba dating from the seventeenth century exist.

In the early years scholars generally referred to all early Pahari works as the 'Basohli' style and later paintings as the 'Kangra' style, named after well-known provenances of earlier and later paintings. The unfortunate lack of inscriptions on Pahari painting has encouraged diverse scholarly opinion, leading to an inadequate basis for a consistent chronological mapping of styles. Until further inscriptional documentation is discovered, the secure attribution of paintings to region and artist must, in some cases, remain obscure. Moreover, recent research has questioned the traditional attribution of style to location and an alternative suggestion of associating style with families of painters has been proposed.[1]

EARLY PAHARI PAINTING

THE ORIGINS of Pahari painting are unclear; it is generally believed, however, that interaction with Rajput rulers from the plains and with the Mughals led to the beginnings of patronage by hill chieftains. Basohli was previously thought to be the first centre of painting in the hill region, as a *Rasamanjari* series of 1660–70 was once the earliest known set of paintings with a definite hill provenance. In 1977, however, an inscribed and dated *Devi Mahatmya* manuscript of 1552 from Jaisinghpur in the Kangra district was discovered, which threw new light on painting in the hills. The *Devi Mahatmya* is a ninth-century text that extols the exploits of the great goddess, and a few illustrated versions have been discovered in the region of the plains. The *Devi Mahatmya* manuscript is in the Early Rajput style: in particular the seated goddess in fig. 76 (verso) recalls female figures in the *Aranyaka Parvan*, an early Rajput manuscript dated 1516 from the Delhi region.[2] Typical characteristics of a high horizon, curvaceous figures with sharply edged veils and the use of primary colours suggest that the artist of the *Devi Mahatmya* had seen early Rajput paintings from the plains or was

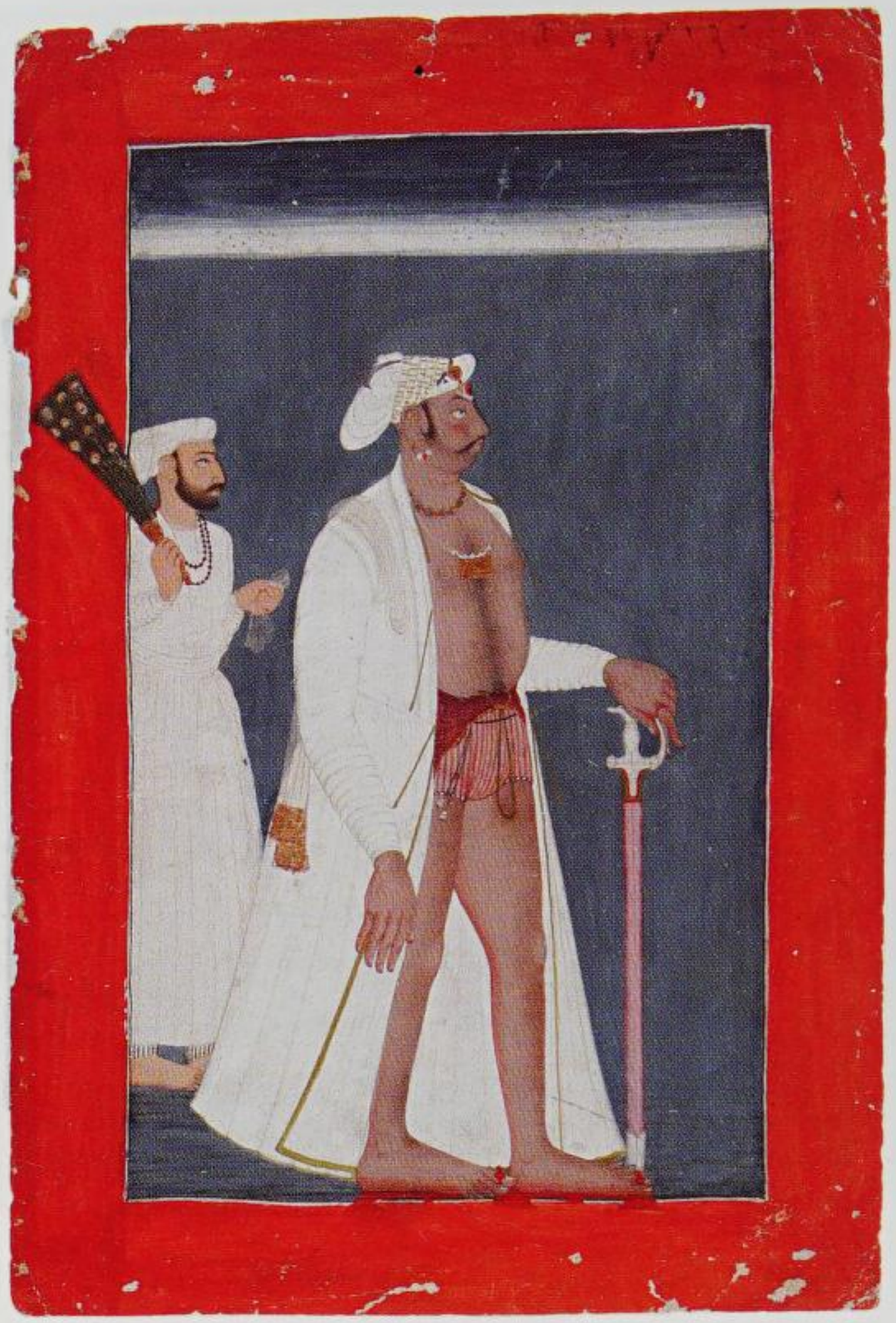
76. Folio from a *Devi Mahatmya* manuscript (top: recto; bottom: verso). Jaisinghpur, Kangra, Punjab hills, 1552. Opaque watercolour on paper, 11.4 x 24.8 cm. State Museum, Shimla.

trained in the Early Rajput style. A lotus flower painted in the centre of the page replaces the hole through which string would pass to tie up the palm leaves of ancient Jain manuscripts; the text inscribed on the horizontal leaf with illustrations on either side is also a Jain convention. The artist of the *Devi Mahatmya* therefore had been exposed to Jain manuscript illustrations as well and was emulating their format.

The recto of fig. 76 depicts the dark-bodied goddess Kali standing on the supine body of Shiva, illustrating the tantric maxim 'Shiva without Shakti is dead'. This maxim reinforces the goddess as *shakti*, or energy, the power behind all creation, while Shiva as the spirit lies dormant unless aroused by her. The goddess seated on a female figure to the right of the page is puzzling, but then there are many mysterious illustrations in this manuscript that do not relate at all to the main narrative of the *Devi Mahatmya* and have proved an enigma to scholars. The verso depicts two male figures offering flowers with hands joined in loving adoration of the goddess seated on a carpet to the left of the page.

The *Devi Mahatmya* manuscript paintings differ completely in subject matter and style from the portraits of the rulers of Mandi, Nurpur and

77 (*above*). 'Raja Hari Sen'. Mandi, Punjab hills, 1630–45. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 32.2 x 19.6 cm. Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.



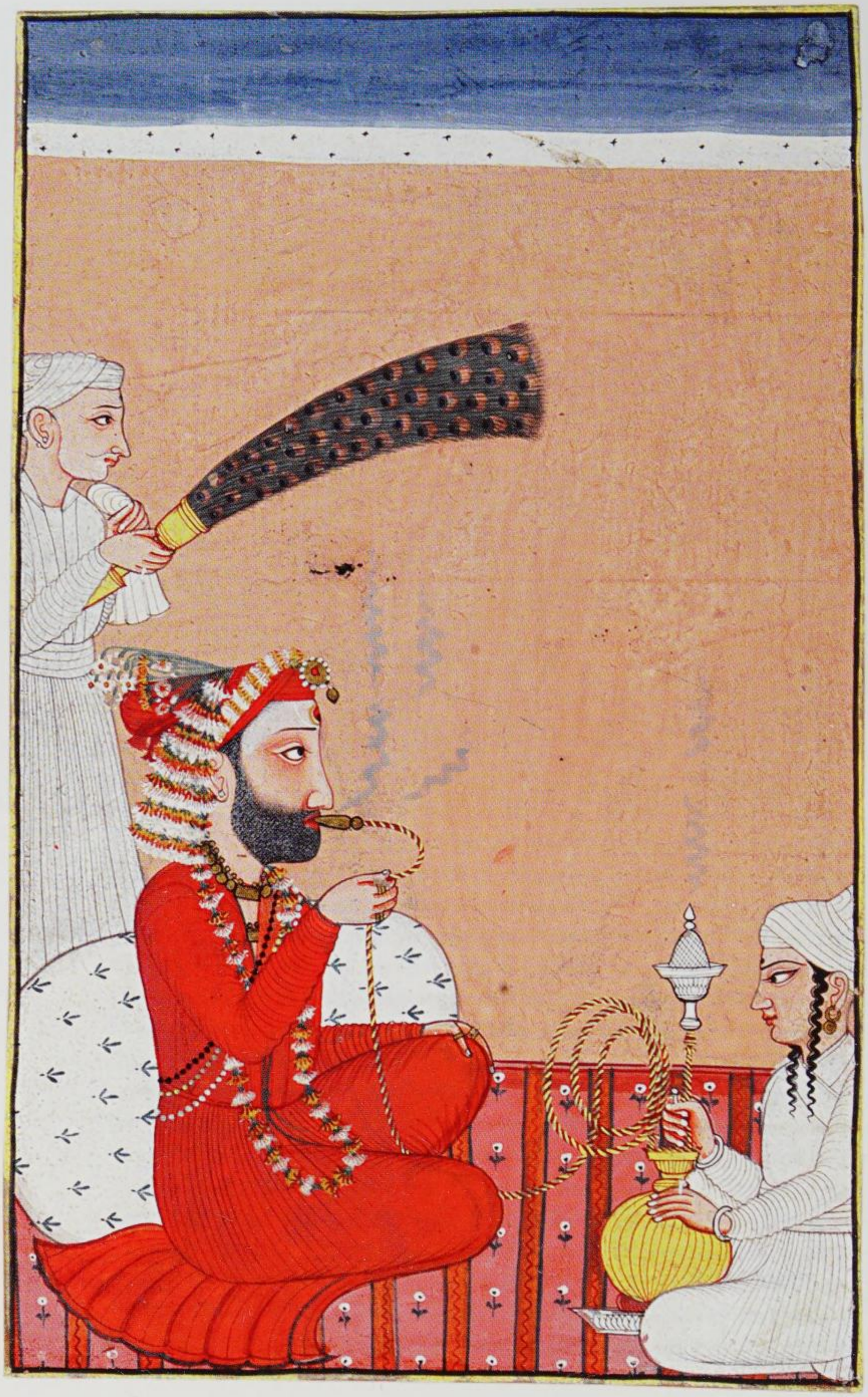
78 (*above right*). 'Raja Sidh Sen'. Mandi, Punjab hills, 1700. Opaque watercolour on paper. 30 x 20.3 cm. Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.

Bilaspur, which follow chronologically in the early seventeenth century, an indication of exposure to the new Mughal genre of portraiture. 'Raja Hari Sen of Mandi' (r. 1623–37; fig. 77) is one such portrait, which appears to have been executed by an artist trained in the Mughal style. The diaphanous *jama*, jade green background and delicately painted facial features bearing a striking resemblance to the subject, as well as his stance, remind one of Jahangiri-period painting. The inscription – 'Mandyal' in Takri, a hill dialect – confirms the hill provenance of this illustration, as does the fact that the painting is not as refined as an imperial Mughal portrait. A hawk rests on the raja's gloved hand, indicating that he was a keen hawker. Hari Sen was an avid patron of painting; several large *Ramayana* and *Bhagavata Purana* paintings in a similar delicate Mughalized style (1630–45) were probably commissioned by him.[3] It is clear that an artist in Mandi was either trained in the Mughal style or had access to Mughal paintings and could effectively copy certain elements from them.

79. 'Matsya avatara: the fish incarnation of Vishnu'. Folio from a *Dasavatara* (Ten Incarnations of Vishnu) series. Mandi, Punjab hills, 1700–20. Opaque water-colour on paper, 16.4 x 25.4 cm. British Museum.

Mandi, a large state, is so called because of its central position on the crossroads of trade (*mandi* means 'market') in the northern area of the sub-continent, a factor leading, no doubt, to the prosperity of the region and the patronage of painting. The Mandi rajas were descended from a branch of the Sen rulers of Bengal who established suzerainty in this area around the tenth or eleventh centuries.

Raja Sidh Sen (r. 1684–1727) of Mandi, grandson of Raja Hari Sen, was a towering figure: a great patron of painting, a keen Shaivite, a fearless warrior and a yogi who supposedly lived for more than a hundred years. Legend has it that he flew to the sacred Ganges river daily for his early morning ablutions before returning to attend to matters of state! Sidh Sen's countenance, his enormity and his legendary power are all realistically portrayed by the artist in fig. 78. The heavy shading on his face and chest is accomplished by stippling, a new feature that renders painting of this period at Mandi less refined than previous works. Compare Sidh Sen's fingers, for example, with those of Hari Sen (fig. 77) or the darkening of Sidh Sen's chest with the refined shading of Hari Sen's hairline and the delicate lines of the hawk. The heavy shading and coarse forms found in 'Matsya avatara' (fig. 79), depicting the fish incarnation of Vishnu, place the work firmly in the Sidh Sen period of Mandi



80. 'Raja Shamsher Sen'. Mandi, Punjab hills, 1735–45. Opaque watercolour on paper, 28.5 x 19 cm. Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.

81. 'Virahanivedana: a lovesick heroine'. Folio from a *Rasamanjari* series, by Golu. Nurpur. Punjab hills, 1710. Opaque watercolour on paper, 17.2 x 27.6 cm. British Museum.

A friend describes to the hero the heroine's condition in separation: 'God created the moon-faced Radha like a flame of light for this earth. As ill luck would have it this flame is dying out and before its end is bursting into a flare. O Krishna, we therefore request you with all humility to revitalize this flame immediately with your love so that the three worlds are not immersed in darkness.'
M.S. Randhawa and S.D.Bhambri, *Basohli Paintings of the Rasamanjari*, p. 113, verse 99.

painting, a period of forty years characterized by this heavily stippled and thus easily recognizable style.

Paintings continue in this vein during the reign of Sidh Sen's grandson Shamsher Sen (r. 1727–81), whose personality was the opposite of that of his legendary grandfather; indeed, he is shown in all his portraits as a weak and ineffectual ruler. In 'Raja Shamsher Sen' (fig. 80) the subject is seen as dwarf-like and pathetic compared with the gigantic and powerful figure of Sidh Sen. Despite painting in thick lines with heavy shading, Mandi artists were adept at representing the characteristics and personalities of their rulers.

Nurpur, strategically placed at the gateway from the Punjab plains to Chamba, Basohli and Jammu, also boasts an early inscribed portrait of one of its well-known rajas, Raja Jagat Singh (r. 1619–46), an ambitious ruler and ally of the Mughals who propelled Nurpur to a position of elevated power in the hill states in the early seventeenth century. The ruling family at Nurpur, founded by Jhetpal of the Tomar clan, was called Pathania after their early capital Pathankot, renamed Nurpur after the Mughal emperor Nur-ud-din Jahangir. This portrait of Jagat Singh has been ascribed a date of 1630 by Karuna Goswamy, which is not unlikely given the closeness of the ruler to the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan and his son Dara Shikoh, and the Pahari rulers' obvious exposure to Mughal portraiture.[4] The portrait is not as

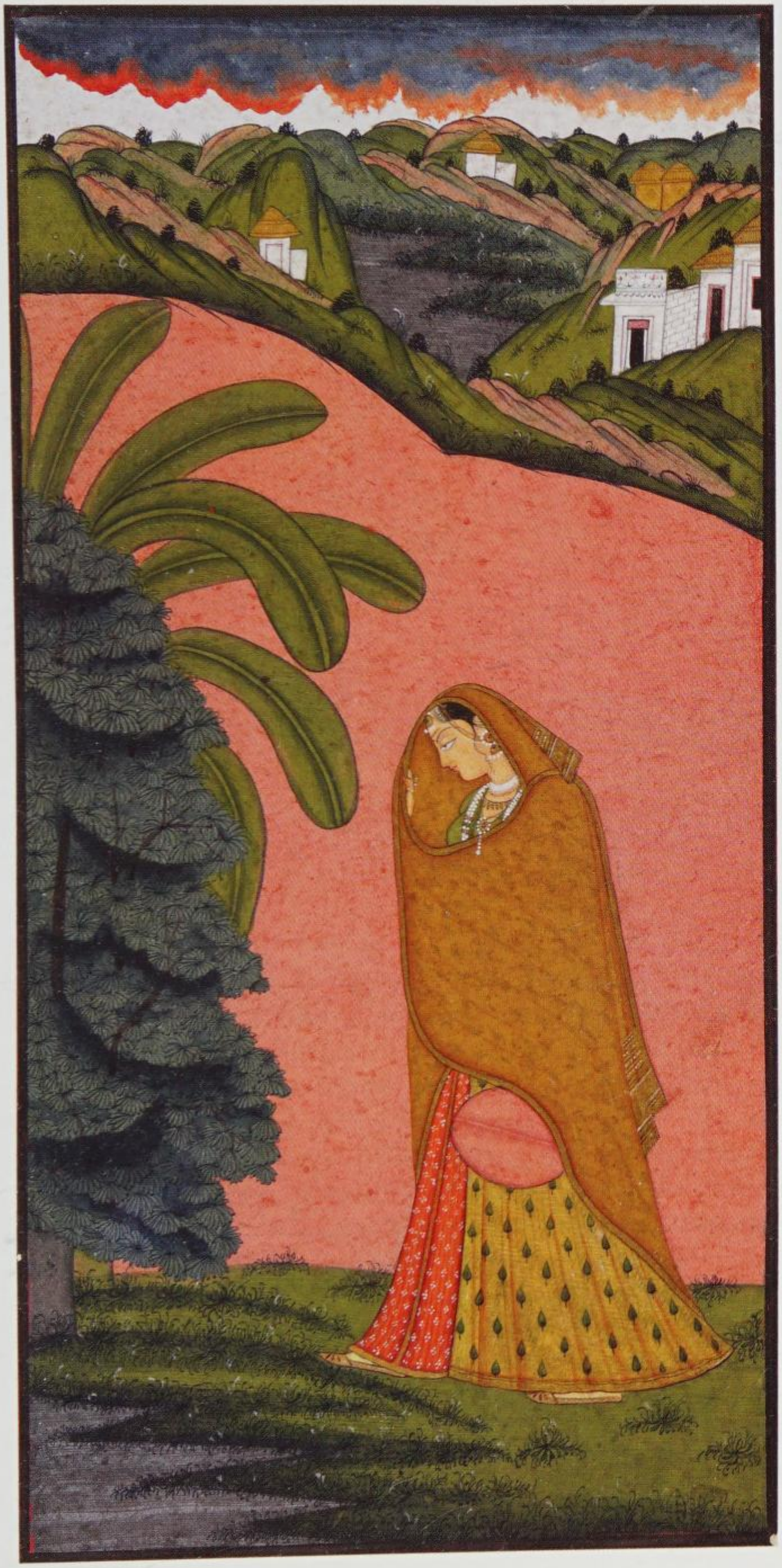
heavily indebted to Mughal painting as the portrait of Hari Sen, and retains the Rajput feature of minimal shading along contours, leading to flatness of form.

A *Rasamanjari* series executed for Raja Daya Dhata (r. 1700–35), great grandson of Jagat Singh, by a well-known artist called Golu, gives an idea of the Nurpur style of the early eighteenth century (fig. 81). Golu was a descendant of Devidas, a Nurpur artist who painted an inscribed *Rasamanjari* series for Raja Kirpal Pal (r. 1678–95) of Basohli in 1695.[5] Golu's style, however, is not as wild as that of his ancestors; the figures, compared with the passionate Basohli examples, are rather subdued, and the eye is an elongated slit that slants outrageously upwards (an eccentric feature of this artist) but is not as ferociously described as a Basohli eye. Another striking feature of Golu's figures is the extremely rounded curvature of the ladies' foreheads going back towards the hairline. The hero of this series bears a striking resemblance to Daya Dhata in the guise of Krishna; it was not uncommon for painters to model their heroes on the portraits of their royal patrons in Rajput painting. The iconography is similar to Devidas's *Rasamanjari*, with sultry women lounging in crisply defined white pavilions and splashes of luscious Basohli hues on striped and floral carpets. Nurpur painting, however, is not a continuation of the early Basohli style, despite artists from the same family of painters working in both states; it is much too restrained compared with the sophisticated wildness of Basohli illustrations and there is a greater use of white in architecture.

The female form of the lady with a pitcher in fig. 82 is more realistically depicted compared with previous figures, and the eye is now quite natural. This painting may be attributed to Nurpur, as it resembles others of Nurpur provenance from the collection of Mian Kartar Singh, descendant of Wazir Ram Singh, a minister of Raja Jaswant Singh of Nurpur (r. 1846–98).[6] The sweeping vistas, rolling hills, diminutive trees and houses receding into space present an attempt at spatial depth, a Mughal influence. The line, however, is hard and imparts a stiff overall impression. Unfortunately, not much is known of later Nurpur painting, but hopefully new discoveries will provide more information on the art history of this important and, until now, neglected state.

Basohli, an offshoot of the Kulu royal house with a clan name of Balauria, is a small hill state famous for its dramatic and vigorous compositions in bright colours with luminous beetle wings cut out and pasted onto the surface to emulate shining jewels. The *Rasamanjari* series dated 1695 commissioned by Kirpal Pal of Basohli, and its stylistic precedent, an earlier *Rasamanjari* of 1660–70, are in a sophisticated, mature style that presupposes an earlier tradition of which nothing is known.[7]

In fig. 13, from the earlier *Rasamanjari* series (1660–70), the wide-eyed heroine, classified by the poet as 'one who is clever in speech', persuades the hero (here none other than Krishna himself) to tarry a while by the banks of



82. 'Lady and a pitcher'.
Nurpur, Punjab hills, 1760.
Opaque watercolour on paper,
18.5 x 8.7 cm. British Museum.

83. 'Krishna revelling with the *gopis*'. Folio from a *Gitagovinda* series. Basohli, Punjab hills, 1730. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper adorned with beetle-wings, 20.8 x 30.5 cm. Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.

'While Hari roamed in the forest
Making love to all the women
Radha's hold on him loosened,
And envy drove her away.'
B.S. Miller, *The Gitagovinda of Jayadeva*, p. 78; the fifth song, sung with *Raga Gurjari*.

the river on a hot summer's day. The hero carries a fan to ward off the midday heat of an Indian summer, part of the standard iconography for this illustration. The bright colours, dynamic lines and bold effects are typical of the 'Basohli style', creating a stunning impression and a sense of raw energy at first glance. The eroticism implied in later *ritikavya*, or mannered poetry (of which the *Rasamanjari* is a prime example), is conveyed in this Pahari painting with a directness and passion not seen in any works from Rajasthan. The lush patterns and zigzagging designs, intense figures and brilliant sparkle of the beetle wings with which this painting is endowed bear no resemblance to the contemporary Mughal-inspired portraits of rulers from Mandi and Nurpur: indeed, these and other stylistically similar works from the states of Mankot and Bahu have a special place in the history of Indian art, for nothing similar precedes or follows them.

An inscribed *Gitagovinda* series painted at Basohli, dated 1730, shows a continuation of the earlier style, albeit with fleshier, more rounded forms and simpler, less decorative settings (fig. 83). Though the primitive ardour of earlier Basohli works is lost, these *Gitagovinda* paintings include the exuberant hues, enormous eyes and beetle-wing cases that distinguish Basohli illustrations and no doubt contribute in depicting the passion of Radha's longing for Krishna. There is, however, a difference in the landscape background,

84. 'Portrait of Sri Mian Kudepi (or Kudehi?)'. Mankot, Punjab hills, 1680–90, Opaque water-colour on paper, 18.2 x 15 cm. British Museum.

A portrait of an unknown prince.

where naturalistic scenery with rolling terrain and realistic-looking trees is attempted. Landscape is now envisaged as a natural rather than symbolic setting, but features such as a high horizon and brilliant background colours still persist. Scholarly opinion is divided as to whether the artist Manaku mentioned in the colophon of this series is the son of Pandit Seu from Guler or another artist with the same name.[8]

Paintings from the small state of **Mankot**, friendly with neighbouring Basohli, have a similar, startlingly passionate style, leading to the conclusion that either Basohli artists painted at Mankot or families of artists with similar stylistic characteristics painted in each state. Claiming descent from a Jammu raja and belonging to the Jammu Riasi family, the ruling family of Mankot was independent from Jammu but owed allegiance to that state's rulers

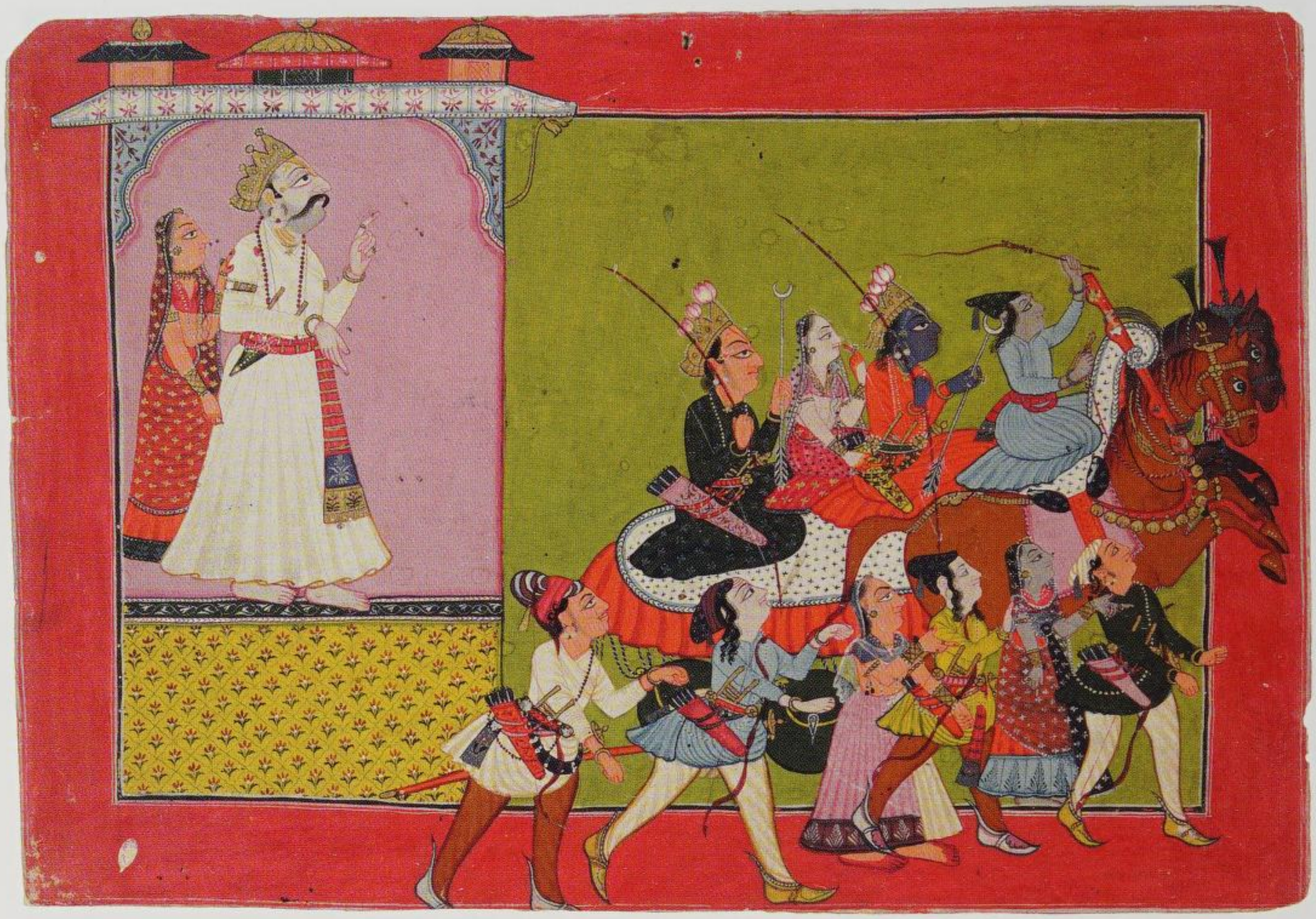
85. 'Krishna enthroned'. Mankot, Punjab hills, 1730. Opaque watercolour on paper, 19 x 18.2 cm. British Museum.

because of family ties. Whereas Basohli rulers preferred paintings of Devi and the *Rasamanjari* in the early period, Mankot rulers, who were staunch Vaishnavites, overwhelmingly commissioned works from the tenth Book of the *Bhagavata Purana*. The Mankot rulers were close to the Mughals and campaigned for them: Raja Tedhi Singh (r. 1710–30) was given the fief of Mahal Mori by Aurangzeb for bravery in battle. This perhaps led to their early preference for portraiture, which was commissioned alongside *Bhagavata*

86. 'Princess receiving a petition'. Mankot, Punjab hills, 1740–50. Opaque watercolour on paper, 16.7 x 26.7 cm. British Museum.

Purana paintings. Portraits of Mankot's rulers, chieftains of other states and, surprisingly, of ordinary people are the basis for attributing the *Bhagavata* paintings to this state, for they are executed in a distinctly similar manner. A portrait of a princely figure with face in profile (fig. 84) displays the bright background colours, large well-shaped eyes with pupils attached to the upper eyelid and colourful floral-patterned rugs common to other portraits from Mankot. A high horizon and backgrounds of the preferred greens, yellows and chocolate browns pervade early Mankot works and were common in those from Basohli and Bahu as well.

The painting of Krishna killing Kansa (fig. 75), the final episode in the deity's early life and the reason for his incarnation on earth, belongs to a vertically formatted *Bhagavata* series, a virtual copy of an earlier horizontal one. Figures enacting the dramatic scene spill out of the page into the borders, another feature of early Mankot painting. With a look of resignation on his face (for he knows his end is near), the wicked King Kansa quickly touches Krishna's feet, for in doing so he stands a chance of salvation. The look of horror on the courtier's face (whose turban is awry in the confusion) is contrasted with the placid, seemingly uncaring look on the faces of the attendants. The artist has attempted to incorporate feelings and sentiment into the facial expressions; this is unusual as generally all faces – in paintings



87 (*above and detail opposite*). 'The departure of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana'. Folio from the Bahu/Shangri *Ramayana*. Bahu, Punjab hills, 1700–10. Opaque watercolour on paper, 21.6 x 31.2 cm. British Museum.

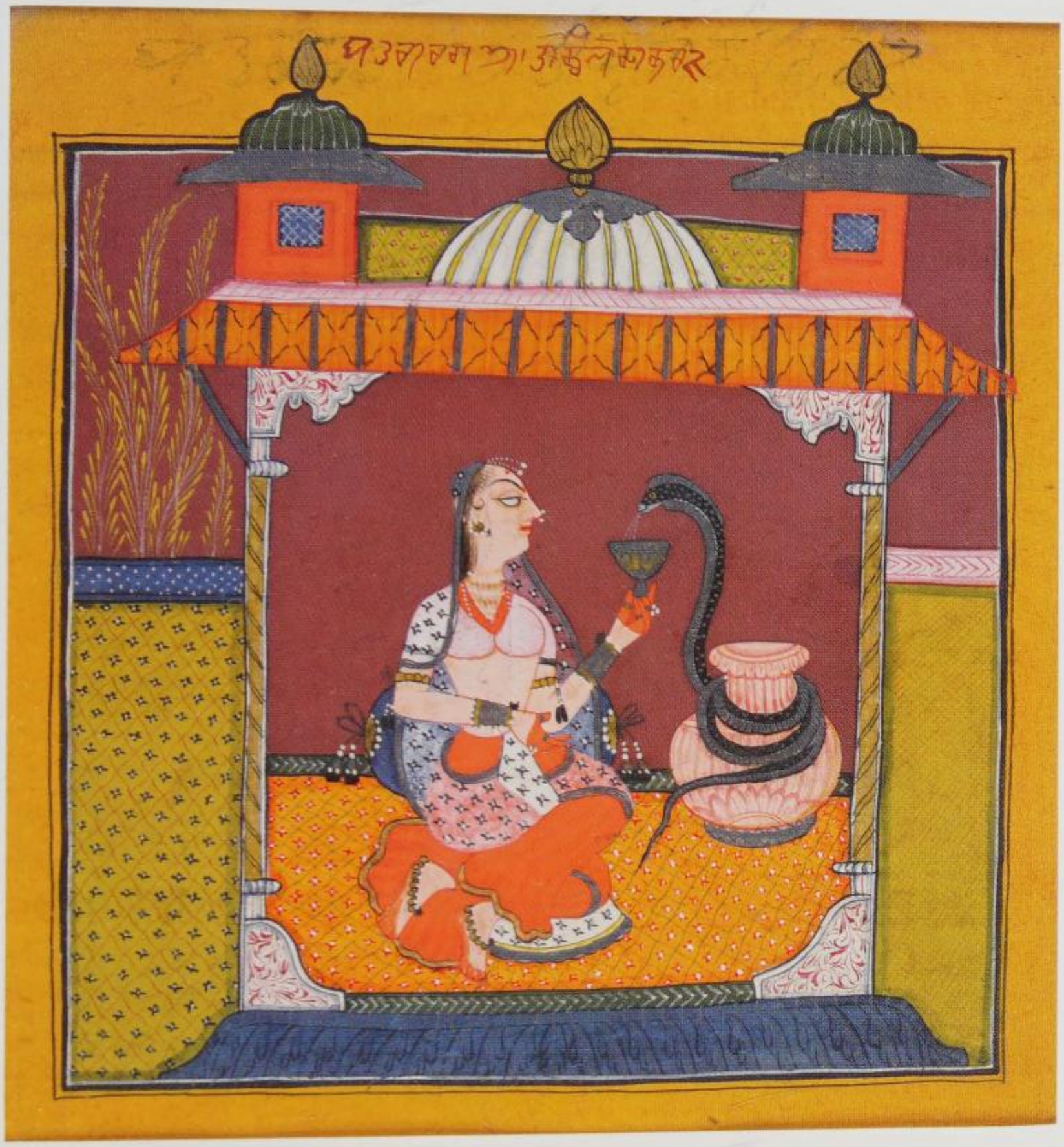
of mythical or divine figures and portraits alike – are benign and placid. The emotions conveyed in the Mankot *Bhagavata* paintings, along with the use of hot colours, sometimes exceed Basohli works in their brilliance. The large ferocious-looking eye is prominent, faces echo almost exactly those in Basohli painting, though plumper, and the bodies of Mankot figures appear sturdy and stocky, especially around the thighs. The movement depicted in the Mankot *Bhagavata* paintings, however, is not matched by Basohli works.

A wonderful painting of Krishna enthroned (fig. 85), with adoring, worshipping maidens around him in the symbolic setting of the forest of Vraja, represented by a backdrop of green with some verdant trees, may be dated a decade or two later. There is a considerable cooling of both the palette and the physiognomy; the faces have subtler eyes and the green background shades are more soothing to the eye than previous hot yellow monochrome tones. But the intensity of the emotion conveyed for Krishna is consistent with the earlier *Bhagavata* paintings, a revelation of the spirit of *bhakti* inherent, perhaps, in both patron and artist of this superb illustration.

The princess receiving a petition in fig. 86 has a rounder plumper face with considerable shading around the edges to impart volume. This style was

prevalent in the mid-eighteenth century during the reign of either Raja Tedhi Singh (r. 1710–30) or Raja Ajmat Dev (r. 1730–60).[9] There is a perceptible shift towards softer forms, cooler shades and the increased use of the colour white. Scarves and skirts flow quite naturally and figures are well arranged. Spatial illusion is attempted, albeit rather unsuccessfully, by eliminating the high horizon and dividing the page into two with a horizontal line and differing background colours. Compared with the contemporary Basohli *Gita-govinda* of 1730 (fig. 82), which maintains to a great degree its earlier wildness and intensity, the Mankot style of the early to mid-eighteenth century appears to veer towards a softer, cooler idiom.

The ancient principality of Jammu in the western region of the Himalayan foothills was split into **Bahu** and **Jammu** in the second half of the sixteenth



88 (*left and detail opposite*). 'Ahiri Ragini'. Folio from a *ragamala* series. Bahu, Punjab hills, 1700–10. Opaque watercolour on paper, 19.1 x 17.9 cm. British Museum.

century following a dispute between members of the Jamwal clan. The Jammu family, called Riasi, claim descent from the Sesodias of Mewar. 'The departure of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana' (fig. 87), from the Shangri *Ramayana* (so called because it was in the possession of Raja Raghubir Singh of Shangri, a fiefdom of Kulu, and thus given a Kulu provenance by some scholars), was most probably painted at Bahu.[10] Haphazard groups of people follow Rama, Sita and Lakshmana adoringly as they leave for their long exile in the forest, while the larger-than-life figure of Dasaratha, Rama's father, heartbroken at his favourite son's departure, gazes helplessly at the departing trio with a sad look on his face. The master artist of this and other Shangri illustrations manages to evoke emotion in fantastical urban and rural settings of wondrous beauty and folk-like charm. Decorative patterning on flat surfaces and domes, and turrets and figures projecting out into borders are more noticeable compared to earlier Basohli works.

89 (*opposite*). 'Todi Ragini of Dipaka Raga'. Folio from a *ragamala* series. Bilaspur, Punjab hills, 1690–1700. Opaque watercolour on paper, 20.5 x 14.5 cm. British Museum.

The meaning and sentiment of this *ragini* are unknown.

A similar sentiment is expressed in 'Ahiri Ragini', from a *ragamala* series (fig. 88). The lady with the long face, fierce eye and highly sloping forehead sits in a chocolate-coloured pavilion that sports gaily decorated pillars, brackets and plinths superimposed on each other, the whole imparting an intensely decorative effect. The similarity with early Basohli painting is, once again, palpable. Although Jammu gained in prominence after its reunification with Bahu in 1715, and several portraits of rulers exist, pointing to the existence of a painting atelier in the state, there is a dearth of information on eighteenth-century painting styles or patronage and it is not possible to trace a stylistic evolution throughout the century.

The rulers of **Bilaspur** (formerly known as Kahlur), a small state traversed by the Sutlej river, south of Mandi, claim descent from the Chandellas of Bundelkhand in central India. Raja Dip Chand (r. 1650–67), the founder of the town of Bilaspur, was close to the Mughals and campaigned for Aurangzeb in the north-west frontier provinces. An early Mughal-inspired portrait of Raja Dip Chand listening to musicians (1660) indicates the beginnings of a painting atelier at Bilaspur.[11] The Mughal influences of facial shading and figural modelling are subtle and may not be immediately apparent. An illustration from a *ragamala* series probably commissioned during the reign of Dip Chand's successor, Bhim Chand (r. 1667–1712), depicts Todi Ragini of Dipaka Raga (fig. 89).[12] Unfortunately, not much research has been carried out on Pahari *ragamala* iconographies or the sentiments they depict, thus it is not possible to decipher the meaning or emotion conveyed by this *ragini*. The women in the painting have soft rounded faces and forms, although a high horizon in simple washes of flat colour and a brighter Rajput palette dominate. The similarities between the ladies in fig. 89 and the lady musicians in the portrait of Dip Chand support an attribution of this *ragini* to Bilaspur.

Devi Chand (r. 1741–78), great grandson of Dip Chand, managed to restore peace after the devastating wars against the Sikhs undertaken by previous Bilaspur rulers. He commissioned a few *ragamala* series that are stylistically similar to fig. 89, but rendered in a harder line. Backgrounds continue to be painted in monochromatic primary colours with a few tree branches symbolizing landscape. One such *ragamala* series that is now in the Berlin Museum of Indian Art exemplifies the Bilaspur style of the mid-eighteenth century. 'Ramagiri Ragini' (fig. 90), showing a lady feeding milk to snakes, is a copy of the same *ragini* from the Berlin Museum series and is in the same style.[13]

Owing to its isolated position in the inaccessible reaches of the upper and middle valleys of the Ravi river, north of the Kangra valley, **Chamba** enjoyed relative peace from foreign invasions. Its indigenous art of temples and sculpture from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries can still be seen and genealogies of families of painters living in this state have been traced back to the early seventeenth century. One of the earliest known portraits of Raja

90. 'Ramagiri Ragini'. Folio from a *ragamala* series. Bilaspur, Punjab hills, 1740–50. Opaque watercolour on paper, 17.7 x 14.6 cm. British Museum.

91 (*opposite*). 'Krishna and the *gopas* demanding milk from Radha and the *gopis* (*Dana Lila*)'. From the Sur Sagar, by Sur Das. Chamba, Punjab hills, 1730–35. Opaque watercolour on paper, 26.9 x 16.6 cm. British Museum.

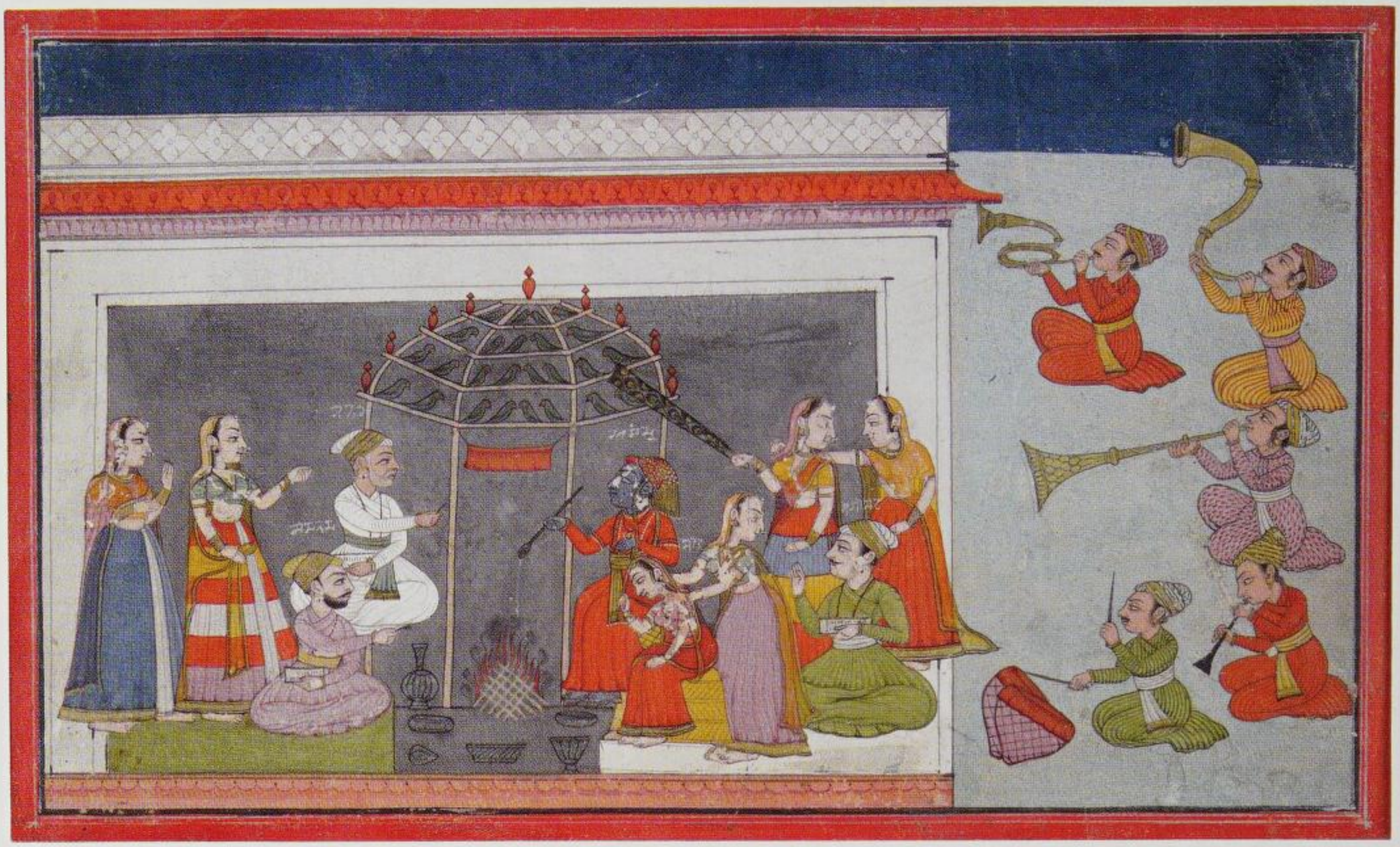
'Krishna, you asked us to gift you
milk and curd but you stole our
hearts.
Butter, curd and whatever else we
have are all yours,
We have surrendered to you our
lives and souls.
Surdas says my Lord is such that
he cannot be attained by yoga,
sacrifices, austerities or
meditation
But delights in asking cowherd
girls for gifts of milk.'

H. Dehejia, *The Flute and the Lotus: Romantic Moments in Indian Poetry and Painting*, p. 117.

Balabhadra Varman (r. 1559–1641) gives evidence of an early painting atelier in this distant state. Several portraits of Raja Chhattar Singh (r. 1664–90) sporting a distinctive face with thickset features and full beard attest to the popularity of portrait painting in the seventeenth century.[14]

A charming painting of Krishna and the *gopas* being fed milk by Radha and the *gopis* (fig. 91) has a distinctive pink tree trunk, a colour used in textiles and architecture in later Chamba painting.[15] The maidens have thin elongated faces and complexions of different hues, another characteristic of Chamba painting. The figures of the *gopas* are softer than those in the Mankot painting of Krishna killing Kansa (fig. 84), and provide an example of the softer style and palette preferred by many artists in the hill states at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

'The marriage of Rama and Sita' (fig. 92) is part of an early *Ramayana* series that is attributed to Chamba, as it is the stylistic forerunner of the work of the

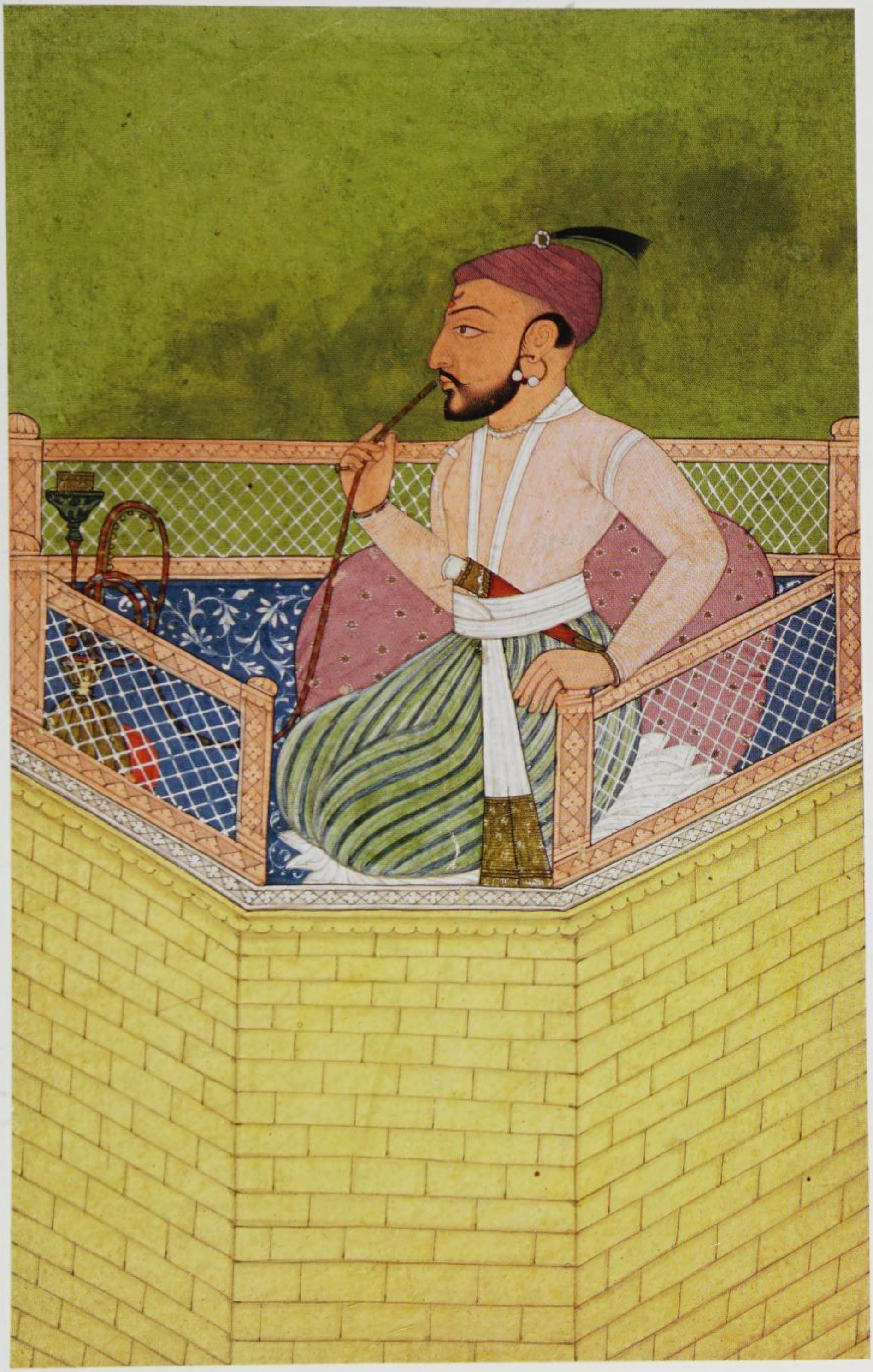


92. 'The wedding of Rama and Sita'. Folio from a *Ramayana* manuscript. Chamba, Punjab hills, 1735–45. Opaque watercolour on paper, 14 x 23.8 cm. British Museum.

well-known artist Laharu and was probably painted by Laharu's ancestors during the reign of Raja Dalel Singh (r. 1735–48). The quaint doll-like figures rendered in softly flowing, rounded forms, the use of pale greens and pinks, a high horizon, no clouds and simple architectural forms of this early *Ramayana* are all hallmarks of Laharu's style, which is almost identical in figural depiction and composition but a little more complex with regard to architecture and landscape. A portrait of Mian Shamsher Singh (fig. 93), the younger brother of Raja Umed Singh (r. 1748–64), is in the style of Laharu.[16] The portrait has a refined line with a simple side profile and uses the pale colours of green, yellow and lilac. Mian Shamsher Singh appears to be the patron of a *Bhagavata Purana* manuscript dated 1757 and painted by Laharu, who was a major court artist at Chamba. Two other vertically formatted *Bhagavata* and *Ramayana* manuscripts dating to 1760–65, which follow the earlier one in iconography and style, are also attributed to Laharu.[17]

93 (*opposite*). 'Portrait of Mian Shamsher Singh', by Laharu. Chamba, Punjab hills, 1750–60. Opaque watercolour on paper, 17.4 x 11 cm. British Museum.

'The planet Mars, or *Mangala*' (fig. 94) is from an unusual astral series also painted around the mid-eighteenth century by the artist Mahesh, a contemporary of Laharu. These two artists painted in very similar styles and their works are sometimes indistinguishable; both produced a prolific number of illustrations of religious texts and series for various Chamba rulers from 1730 until around 1770. The neatly drawn flat figures of Mars, or *Mangala*, in the centre, and Karttikeya and Gajalakshmi on either side, with light shading



94. 'The planet Mars, or *Mangala*', by Mahesh. Folio from an astral series. Chamba, Punjab hills, 1725–50. Opaque watercolour on paper, 16 x 24.4 cm. British Museum.

The central figure represents the planet Mars, or *Mangala*, depicted in a fiery orange colour, carrying the attributes of a spear, trident and mace, and seated on a goat. On either side are Karttikeya, the god of war, depicted here as a virile youth with his peacock mount beside him, and Gajalakshmi, or the goddess Lakshmi, seated on a lotus borne aloft by four elephants.

along the jaw lines to impart volume, are very similar to Laharu's figures. A trademark of both Laharu's and Mahesh's style is the constant use of figures with one foot raised behind the other (a position of supplication), large heads atop short, slim bodies with faint shading to impart volume, and no perspective whatsoever.

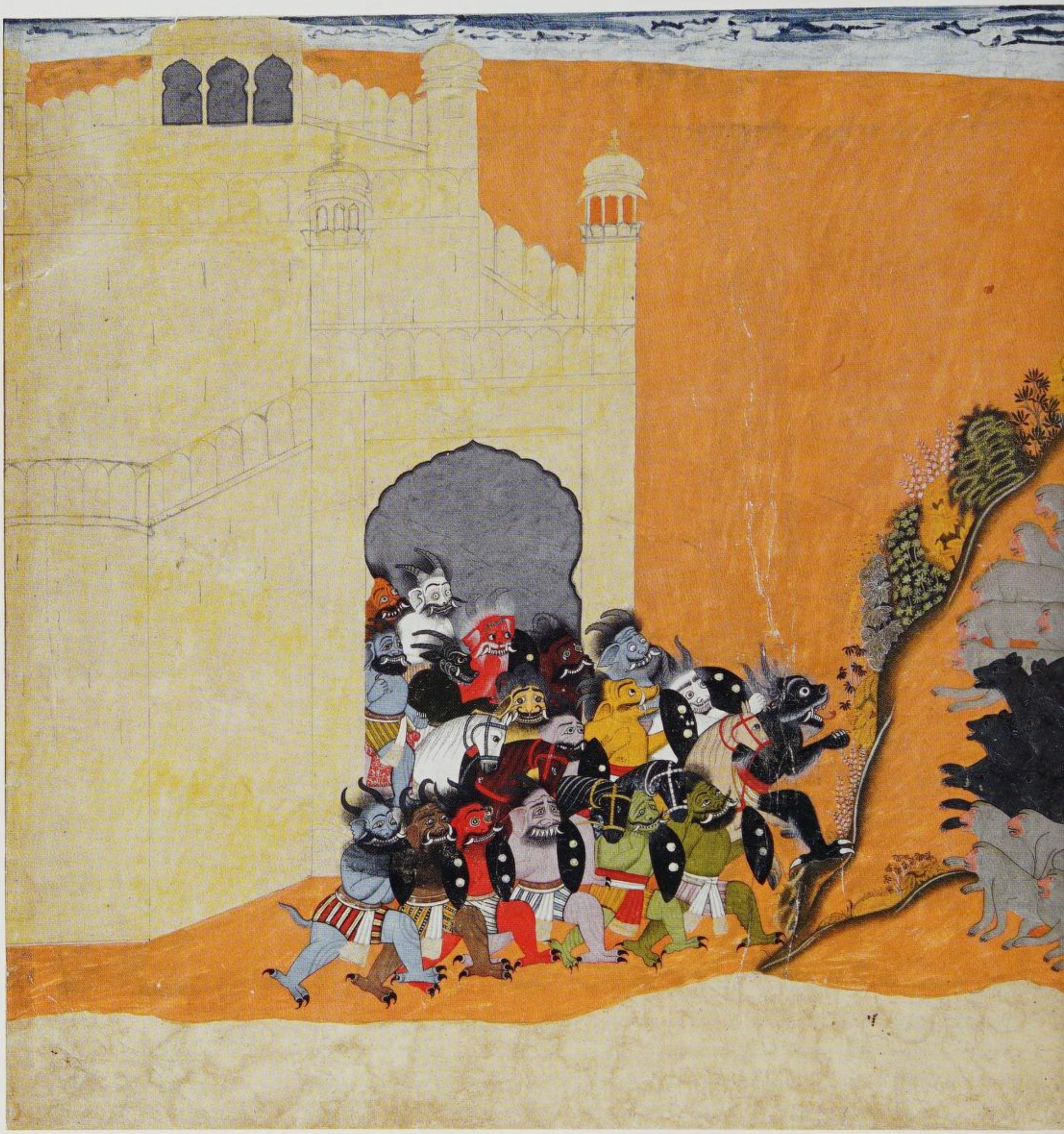
It can be seen that the early styles of the Pahari states appear to be subdivided into two broad categories. Basohli, Mankot and Bahu formed a group that retained vigorous styles similar to each other until the early eighteenth century, oblivious to outside influences, the Mankot style gradually becoming calmer and milder towards the middle of the eighteenth century. The states of Mandi, Nurpur, Bilaspur and Chamba favoured portraiture that was stylistically influenced to some extent by Mughal painting throughout the seventeenth century, though the portraits could never be mistaken for Mughal or Rajasthani works. Each state in this latter group had its own distinctive style, each evolving in different ways. These and other early styles of smaller kingdoms coalesced into the later Pahari style, which was influenced to a great degree by artists trained in the Mughal style of the period of Muhammad Shah.

LATER PAHARI PAINTING

RESEARCH ON Pahari artists carried out by Professor B.N. Goswamy has recently challenged the historical attribution of style to geographical location. The style of the Seu family of artists, comprising Pandit Seu and his sons Manaku and Nainsukh, has been traced from their home state Guler to various other Pahari kingdoms where their progeny dispersed from the mid-eighteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century. In India the profession of artist was usually handed down the generations; sons and nephews served as apprentices to fathers and uncles and painted in a 'family style', adding personal characteristics of their own in the development of that style. As generations of artists moved from state to state as a result of war or personal circumstances, seeking patronage from rulers, the family style would spread from one court to another. The family style of the Seus spread to various hill states in this way.

An unusual source for Goswamy's research was the registers recording family visits to places of Hindu pilgrimage, such as Haridwar, Pehowa and Kurukshetra on the banks of the Ganges. It is the custom for Hindus to visit a pilgrimage site such as Haridwar with the ashes of a deceased family member (Hindus practise cremation) in order to immerse them in the sacred waters. During these visits a family member would record relatives' births and deaths in registers kept by priests at the pilgrimage sites. Other sources of information included a drawing of a female goddess with multiple arms discovered in the Seu artists' family home in Gaggal-Rajol, indicating the dispersal of the family to various states in the hill region in search of employment; later land grants recorded by Sikh rulers (for whom the family painted in the nineteenth century); and land revenue records kept by the British in the Kangra district. The details gathered about the Seu family's whereabouts, together with a few inscribed paintings and traveller's records, make it possible to attribute their family style to artists of the first and second generations after Nainsukh. In the light of this research, later Pahari styles may now be more accurately attributed to painter families than to geographical location.[18] The question of courtly patronage, however, should also be considered when attempting to shed light on the art history of the Pahari region; and the discussion of later Pahari painting that follows endeavours to take all these factors into consideration.

Around the second quarter of the eighteenth century Pahari painting underwent a dramatic change from the various early Pahari styles to one closer to the Mughal style of the Muhammad Shah period. Scholars now accept that these changes result from training in a Mughal centre and not a mere copying of paintings. Various paintings executed by Nainsukh (active around 1735–78) for his patron Raja Balwant Singh of Jasrota (1724–63) display the artist's masterly and sensitive style and indicate that he was trained at



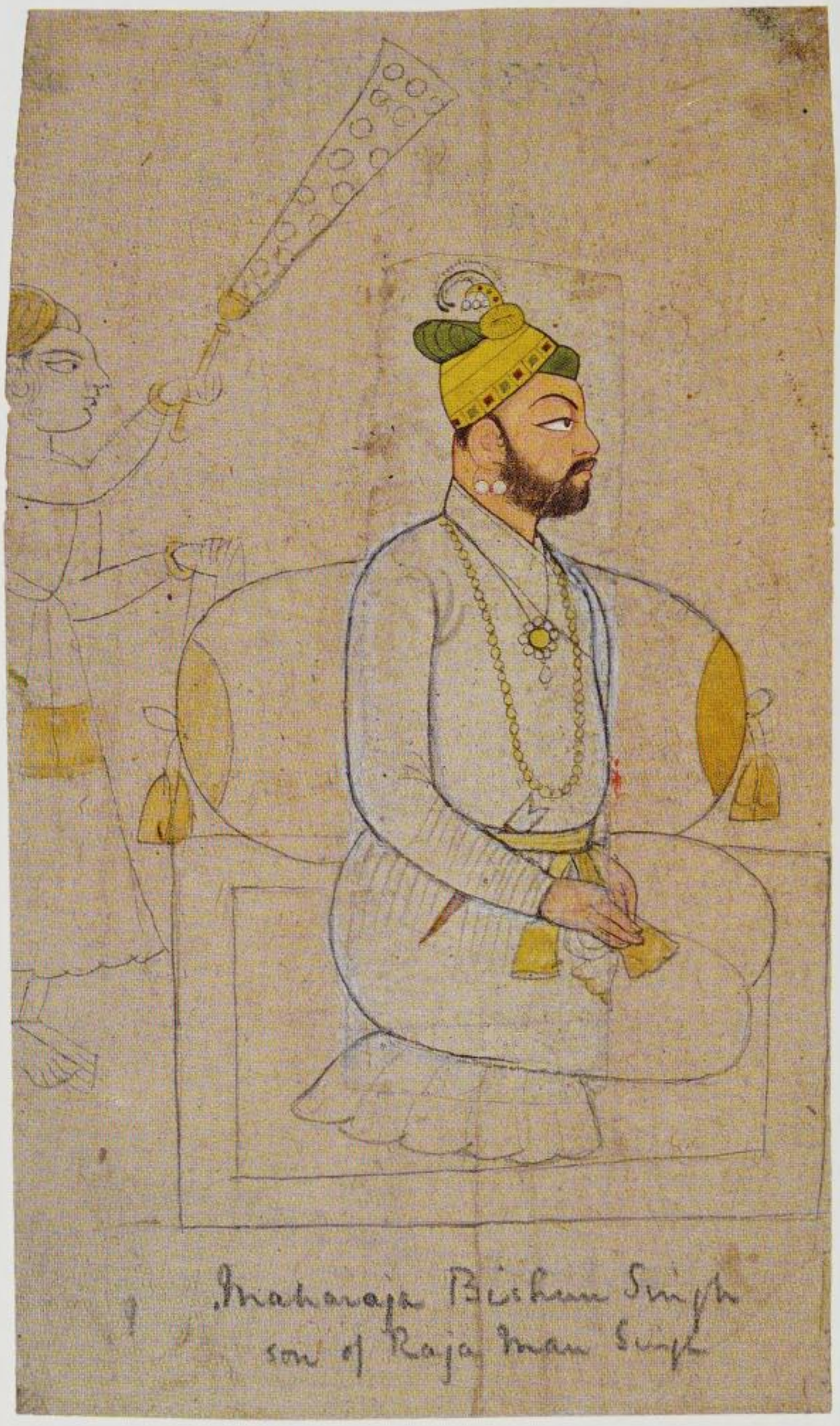
the Mughal court in Delhi. Although there is no inscriptional evidence for Pandit Seu's work, a style close to that of his son Nainsukh is presumed and, on the basis of that assumption, scholars have attempted to trace his career.[19] Three inscriptions on stylistically diverse paintings identifying Manaku as the artist have led to differing opinions about Manaku's style of work. One of

95. 'The demons make a sortie'. From the Siege of Lanka series. Guler, Punjab hills, 1725–30. Opaque watercolour on paper, 59 x 79.8 cm. British Museum.

these inscriptions is found on the reverse of a painting from the *Gitagovinda* series from Basohli dated 1730 (see fig. 78). This may not have been painted by Manaku of the Seu family, as there is evidence that another painter of the same name lived in Basohli at that time.[20] The other two inscribed paintings, one with a Persian inscription on the reverse, the other with a Nagari inscription, have certain features that belong to the later Pahari style of the first generation after Nainsukh (1770–1800) and hence have not been accepted as *prima facie* evidence of Manaku's style.[21] It is, however, presumed that he painted at Guler in a style close to that of his brother Nainsukh.

Although much is now known about the Seu family from Guler, it must be remembered that there were other artists of whom we know almost nothing, for the Seu family was certainly not the only family of painters in the Pahari region. The Mughalized style of painting in the hills seems to begin around 1735–40 and could be related to the sack of Delhi by the Persian Nadir Shah in 1739, which precipitated the departure of many artists from that area. Pandit Seu and his sons, who most probably trained at the Mughal court at Delhi, may have returned to Guler around that time.[22]

The new style of painting appears to have originated in Guler, to which we must turn for examples. **Guler**, a state founded by a branch of the Katoch clan of Kangra, whose rulers were allies of the Mughals, had aided Jahangir in capturing Kangra fort in 1620. In order to see the change brought about by the Seu family at Guler, previous styles in use at the time should be looked at. The *Dilparanjani*, a document dated 1703, affirms the existence of a colony of artists at Guler, who probably painted for Raja Dalip Singh (r. 1695–1741), the ruler of the state. 'The siege of Lanka', a series of large paintings (forty known folios) in a transitional



96. 'Portrait of Bishan Singh'. Guler, Punjab hills, 1730–40. Opaque watercolour on paper, 17.7 x 10.3 cm. British Museum.

style, was probably commissioned by Dalip Singh at Guler.[23] The subject derives from the sixth volume of the *Ramayana*, when Rama with his army of monkeys and bears attacks Ravana's stronghold at Lanka. One folio from the series (fig. 95) illustrates Ravana's army of colourful demons pouring out of the gates of Lanka's fortress, ordered by Ravana to attack Rama's army, seen to the right of the page. The colourful orange background is a continuation of the earlier style that prevailed in the hill region, one in which symbols, bright colours and unrealistic elements take precedence. The bright orange mound demarcated by a row of trees on which the seated allies confer, however, is an indication of an awareness of natural landscape, reminiscent of the *Gitagovinda* of 1730, in which similar tentative beginnings of naturalistic landscape depiction are evident (see fig. 83). Portraits in a series depicting rajas and their heirs riding elephants, dating to around 1740 and probably commissioned by Dalip Singh, attempt to show perspective, with rounded hills beyond which diminutive figures, cityscapes and trees vanish into the distance. This series of portraits appears to bridge the gap between earlier paintings and illustrations painted in the Mughal manner by the Seu family at Guler.[24] The artist of the series is certainly aware of Mughal painting and tries to draw in a naturalistic manner.

A portrait of Dalip Singh that may be datable to around 1740, and another of his eldest son, Bishan Singh (1709–40/41), reflect a naturalistic style that aims at individualization and have been executed by an artist with some training in a Mughal centre of painting, perhaps Pandit Seu. The portrait of Bishan Singh (fig. 96) has been copied by a stencil or tracing based on an earlier portrait. We know this as the line is very thick and has been drawn over several times. Also, the mediocre calibre of the artist can be seen in his rough drawing of the attendant, while the portrait has been executed by an artist sensitive to the nuances of Mughal portraiture.[25] Bishan Singh was the eldest son of Dalip Singh but he died young and did not succeed to the throne.

97. 'Portrait of Raja Govardhan Chand and family'. Guler, Punjab hills, 1755–60. Opaque watercolour on paper, 20.3 x 28.7 cm. Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.

A portrait of Raja Govardhan Chand (r. 1745–73) and his family is important, as this new style of portraiture can definitely be ascribed to one of Govardhan Chand's artists at Guler, perhaps Manaku of the Seu family, as suggested by Karl Khandalavala (fig. 97).[26] Govardhan Chand's portrait has been executed with skill and depicts his personal traits with sensitivity. The ladies are all idealized figures and do not appear to be individual portraits; they exhibit, however, a new, fresh form with graceful attenuated figures and small, pert noses and mouths. It is easy to see that they derive from Mughal female types of the Muhammad Shah period (see fig. 4). A painting of a noblewoman entertained by musicians (fig. 98) shows ladies of the same sensitive demeanour as fig. 97 and has possibly been executed by the same artist, although a bright yellow background is a vestige of earlier Pahari painting. Their tall, lithe, graceful and upright forms become the hallmark of the later Pahari style, which spread through the first generation after Nainsukh and Manaku to various states in the region, particularly Kangra, where Manaku's sons Khushal and Fattu painted in the atelier of Raja Sansar Chand.

The softly rounded contours of Krishna's foster mother, Yashoda, and a lady companion pushing the infant Krishna on a swing in fig. 13 (1755–60) are extremely similar to the ladies in figs 97 and 98. The pale green rolling

98. 'Princess entertained by lady musicians'. Guler, Punjab hills, 1755–60. Opaque watercolour on paper, 21.4 x 24.7 cm. British Museum.

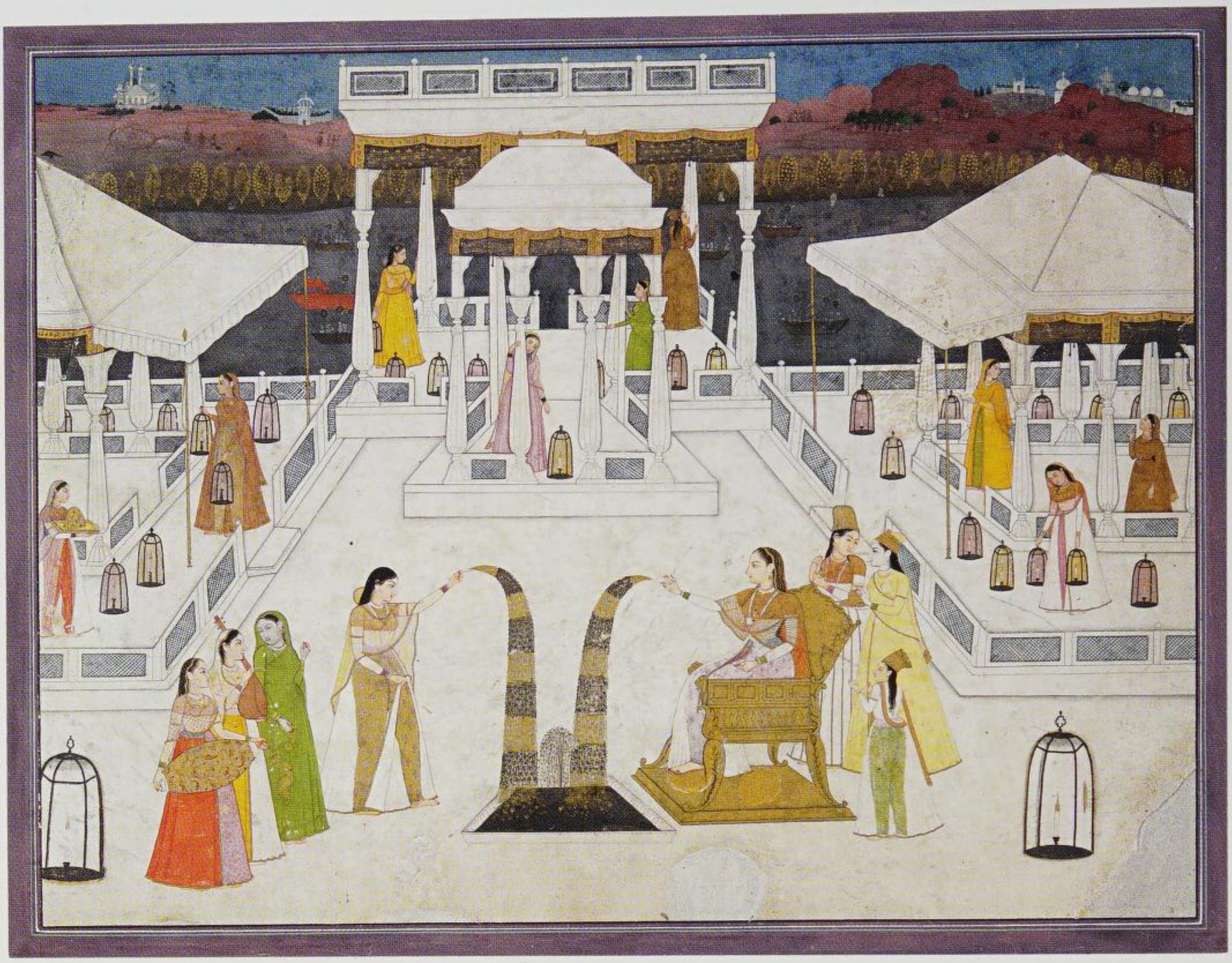
hillside gently receding into the distance, the tree that bends in a lifelike manner in empathy with the god seated majestically under its branches, and the sensitively delineated figures of Krishna, Balarama and their foster parents are typical of the mature, well-formulated painting style at Guler. Although fig. 13 has the crisp, clean look of a Muhammad Shah-period illustration, it differs not only in style but in the spirit of *bhakti*, inherent in this image. The graceful figural outlines, sensitive attenuated forms and idyllic freshness confirm the new style at Guler, attributable to a member of the Seu family, probably Manaku.

'Emperor Muhammad Shah and ladies' (fig. 99) is in the refined, technically assured manner of later Mughal painting but differs in some respects from the style practised at the court of Muhammad Shah. The figures are not as well modelled, and the ladies seated to the left assume a distinctive manner that can be seen in later Pahari works. This painting, along with two other known illustrations of Mughal emperors, one showing Bahadur Shah I (r. 1707–12) receiving a courtier, may be part of a series of Mughal portraits painted either

99. 'Emperor Muhammad Shah and ladies', attributed to Nainsukh. 1735–40. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 22.1 x 33.8 cm. British Museum.

by Pandit Seu or Nainsukh, or by both while practising the Mughal style at Delhi.[27] The painting of Bahadur Shah is in the same style as fig. 99: in particular the attendant behind Bahadur Shah is very similar to the attendant on the left of fig. 99. Both sets of attendants in the two paintings may have been executed by Nainsukh, as expressive portraiture is Nainsukh's trademark. In Nainsukh's later paintings for his patron Raja Balwant Singh, every important figure, whether a musician, dancer or court attendant, is a keenly observed and beautifully drawn portrait from life. Influences from the Muhammad Shah-period painting style are easily discernible in the long *jamas*, the attenuated figures, the white terrace and railing, and the generally flatter, stiffer style compared to earlier Mughal works. Nainsukh may have learned to paint in the Mughal manner either from his father or directly at the Delhi court.

'A fireworks display' (fig. 100), also attributed to Nainsukh, looks like a painting of the mid-eighteenth century from Oudh, an eastern Mughal province.[28] As mentioned above, artists from the Mughal ateliers fled Delhi during and after Nadir Shah's ignominious sack of the city in 1739, and may have sought employment in the province of Oudh with Safdar Jang (r. 1739–54) and Shuja ʿal Daula (r. 1754–75), successive Nawabs of Oudh, painting at the provincial court in the Mughal manner. Whether Nainsukh copied



100 (*above and detail opposite*). 'A fireworks display', attributed to Nainsukh. 1760–63. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 22.2 x 29.7 cm. British Museum.

this painting from an Oudh original or actually visited that province and experimented with painting there is a matter for conjecture. It is possible that Nainsukh stopped at Oudh on his way to Jagannath Puri while accompanying Raja Amrit Pal of Basohli (r. 1757–78) on a pilgrimage, as recorded in an inscription in the family register at Haridwar in 1763, and thus may have been exposed to Oudh painting.[29] The formal composition, ladies' *peshwaz* costumes (tight-fitting trousers over which diaphanous long skirts are draped) and tall hats, white architecture with a multitude of pavilions and pillars, and the row of brown uniform trees in the background are in the Oudh style. The only Pahari feature is that of the ladies' forms, which Nainsukh could have added as his personal touch, his signature so to speak, and it is this feature that differentiates this painting from one in the Oudh provincial style.

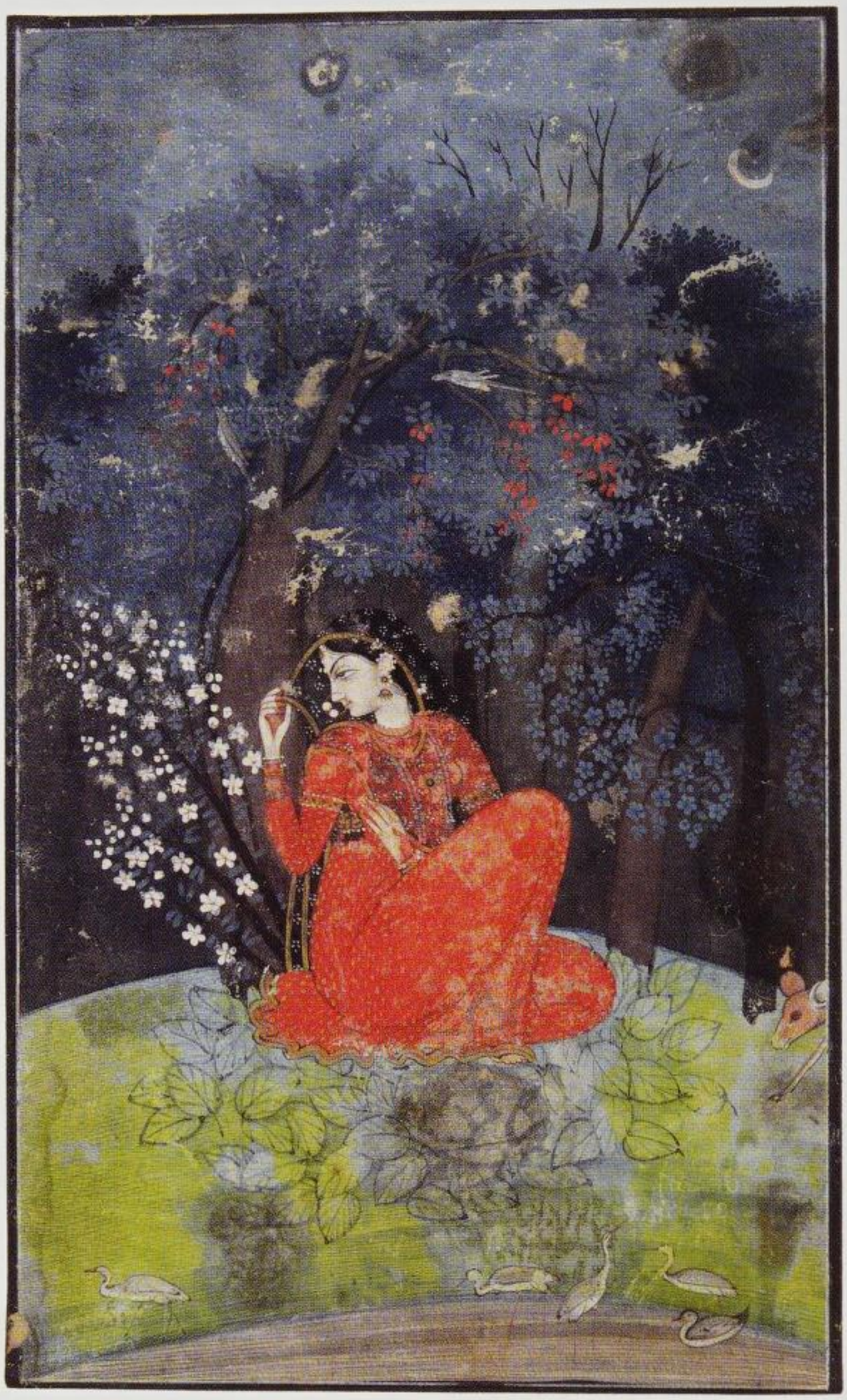
Nainsukh's fame as an artist, however, stems from the intimate portraits of his patron Raja Balwant Singh (1724–63) of **Jasrota**, whom he captured in everyday situations such as having his beard trimmed, listening to musicians, assessing the merits of a horse, hunting partridge or writing a letter. These

intimate scenes of a raja's personal life are a most unusual genre of Rajput painting and give us an idea of the empathy that must have existed between artist and patron. The usual relationship between a member of the ruling class and a low-caste painter was that of master and slave. Jasrota, a small state adjacent and subservient to the larger state of Jammu, with a line of rulers descended from the Jamwal clan, has no known history of a painting tradition before Nainsukh. Although great art has traditionally been linked to powerful patrons from large kingdoms, some discerning patrons from smaller states such as Jasrota may also, at times, have encouraged superior artistic expression. The painting of Balwant Singh listening to musicians (fig. 101) has an inscription in the same hand as that on fig. 99. This beautiful painting represents Nainsukh's mature style. The delicate refined line, sophisticated composition, illusionistic technique created by the simple horizontal line dividing the page, lack of background colour and penetrating individualization are all distinctive features of Nainsukh as an artist. His penchant for painstaking detail, visible in the rug and drapery patterns, and the seemingly careless way

in which fabric falls, whether in Balwant Singh's sash or the singer Ladbai's skirt, are also his trademarks. But, above all, Nainsukh's talent lies in the subtlety expressed in his works and his mastery of line and composition. If Manaku did indeed paint at Guler for Govardhan Chand, as it is thought that he did, it is easy to see the differences in style between the two brothers. Comparing figs 97 and 98 with fig. 101, we can see that Nainsukh focused on the depiction of psychology in portraiture while Manaku developed the idyllic Pahari ladies' face and figure that were to become a feature of the Seu family style in later Kangra painting.

101. 'Raja Balwant Singh and musicians', by Nainsukh. Jasrota, Punjab hills, 1745–50. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 19.2 x 32.5 cm. British Museum.

Kangra, a large state extending from Nurpur and Chamba on its northern borders to Mandi in the east and the Punjab plains towards the south-west, comprises the breathtaking landscape of the Kangra valley surrounded by towering hills. Kangra fort, perched on the peak of a jagged hilltop, was historically coveted as the symbol of power in the valley and the region. The Katoch family of Kangra, an ancient clan occupying a position of importance among the hill states, defied the Muslim invader with regular military forays and skirmishes (but not from Kangra fort, which fell to the Mughals in 1620) from the seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century, which explains their



102. 'Utka Nayika: a lady awaits her lover in the forest'. Kangra, Punjab hills, 1775–80. Opaque watercolour on paper, 20.5 x 12.2 cm. British Museum.

'Oh brother bower, Oh friend jasmine, Oh beloved mango tree, Oh night, compassionate mother, Oh darkness as loving as a father – tell me why my lover, whose countenance is as bewitching as the rain cloud (Krishna) has not come.' Bhanudatta.

crippled economic and artistic circumstances during that period. There is no known early Kangra painting (apart from the 1552 *Devi Mahatmya* manuscript): its main flowering took place under later rulers who overthrew Mughal hegemony in the mid-eighteenth century.

Raja Ghamand Chand (r. 1761–74) was the first powerful ruler to win back most of the lost Kangra territory and reassert Kangra's dominance in hill politics. A series of portraits of him in durbar with other rajas is in the emerging Kangra style, which was influenced by Muhammad Shah-period painting but included Rajput traits of high horizon and courtly hierarchy. Ghamand Chand's grandson Raja Sansar Chand (r. 1775–1823) recaptured Kangra fort from the Mughals in 1786 and became the most powerful ruler of the hill states. Sansar Chand was the greatest of all Kangra rulers and a major patron of painting, and a golden age of Kangra art flourished during his reign. The Seu family style is apparent in a vast number of paintings from Kangra in the poetical and literary genre during the period 1770–1800, including series of the *Bhagavata Purana*, *Gitagovinda*, *Ramayana* and Bihari's *Satsai*. Although paintings cannot be attributed to individuals in the family, as there are no inscriptions, it is known from accounts of travellers to Sansar Chand's court that Fattu and Khushal, sons of Manaku, were attached to the Kangra atelier, and it is more than likely that they were responsible for a majority of these works.

The demure heroine in fig. 102 is seated in a bower of leaves in a forest glade waiting for her lover. Her coy but sensual profile is typical of the Kangra face, with perfected Pahari features of a refined nose, sweeping eyes and small mouth with full lips, her delicately hennaed hands and folds of swirling drapery adding to her sensuality and vulnerability. Wild animals and birds abound in the thicket beside her, and sprigs of flowering hillside plants enhance the natural setting. The crescent moon barely visible in the dark sky adds to the atmosphere of the night-time tryst. Indeed, the generation of artists following Nainsukh and Manaku became masters at depicting nature symbolically and realistically in harmony with man and beast, thereby

103. 'The sage Medhas narrates the three-fold story of the *Devi Mahatmya* to Suratha and Samadhi'. Folio from a *Devi Mahatmya* series. Kangra, Punjab hills, 1775–80. Opaque watercolour on paper, 14.6 x 23.4 cm. British Museum.

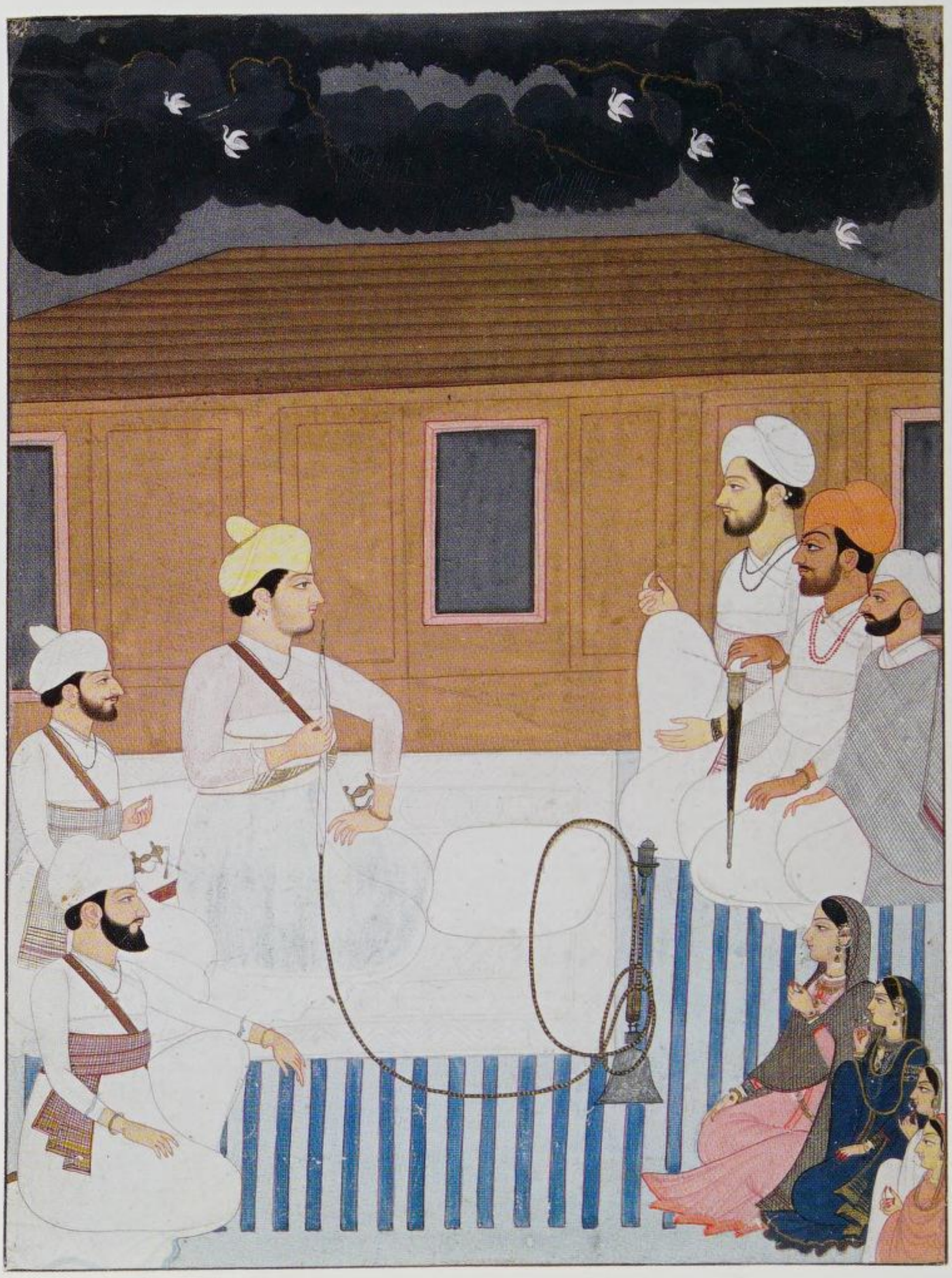
enhancing the emotion of the subject depicted. In fig. 103, the opening folio of a *Devi Mahatmya* series, the two figures of the men and wild deer perfectly balance the ascetic, his hut and disciple seated among the lush landscape of undulating hills and forested slopes in muted tones of green. Perspective was attempted but never given prominence, the ultimate objective being to interpret narrative gently and with heightened lyricism. And, indeed, it is the narrative of Rama and Sita, Krishna and Radha, the endearing *gopis* and *gopas* of Krishna's childhood, and the heroes and heroines of love poetry that these artists excelled at drawing. Tall, handsome men and sensual, wondrous women in large, panoramic, mountainous settings and within massive ramparts of forts and palaces are sketched and painted to perfection, capturing a 'magical world' that Ananda Coomaraswamy wrote of in his landmark publication on Rajput painting (1916).[30]

The bird's-eye view in fig. 104 reveals a large architectural panorama with narrative action taking place within its walls, in fact a scene from the *Ramayana* where Rama lifts a bow in order to win Sita's hand in marriage (the painting is incomplete and the bow and details of architecture are missing). Mastery of line and composition is evident; the walls create a feeling of spaciousness within a palace courtyard, in which a multitude of characters play out their parts. Groups of people engaged in conversation overlap and crowd together realistically; the tall, lithe figures of the ladies in colourful and gay dress are all

104 (*above and detail opposite*). 'Rama lifting the bow'. Folio from a *Ramayana* manuscript. Kangra, Punjab hills, 1775–80. Opaque watercolour on paper, 20 x 29 cm. British Museum.

Kangra types, similar to the ladies in Guler painting; the men, however, seem to have different characteristics and individual physiognomies. The expressive gestures of Lakshmana and the men standing behind Rama, who are astonished at the latter's marvellous feat, could have been executed by Nainsukh himself, and traces of his style are apparent in this work, possibly drawn by one of his nephews Khushal or Fattu.

A drawing of the holy family of Shiva on Mount Kailasha (fig. 8), a blissfully domesticated scene, is also from Kangra. The assured line could have been drawn by a master artist for his pupils to use as a tracing to reproduce time and again. This charming drawing epitomizes the fluency of line, simple yet magnificently sensitive composition and refinement that the first generation after Nainsukh managed to express in all their works. The best Kangra paintings are of the period 1775–1800, after which a decline sets in, as Sansar Chand was preoccupied with defending Kangra fort against a confederation of hill rajas, none of whom could condone his belligerent ways. The Sikhs were called upon to intervene and finally took possession of the fort; Sansar Chand was made to pay tribute and forcibly retire to Tira Sujanpur, another of his palaces in Kangra, in 1805. A portrait of this indomitable hill ruler in seated position with courtiers, *ranis* and attendants (fig. 105) is in a mediocre style, and cannot be compared in terms of quality with portraits of Balwant

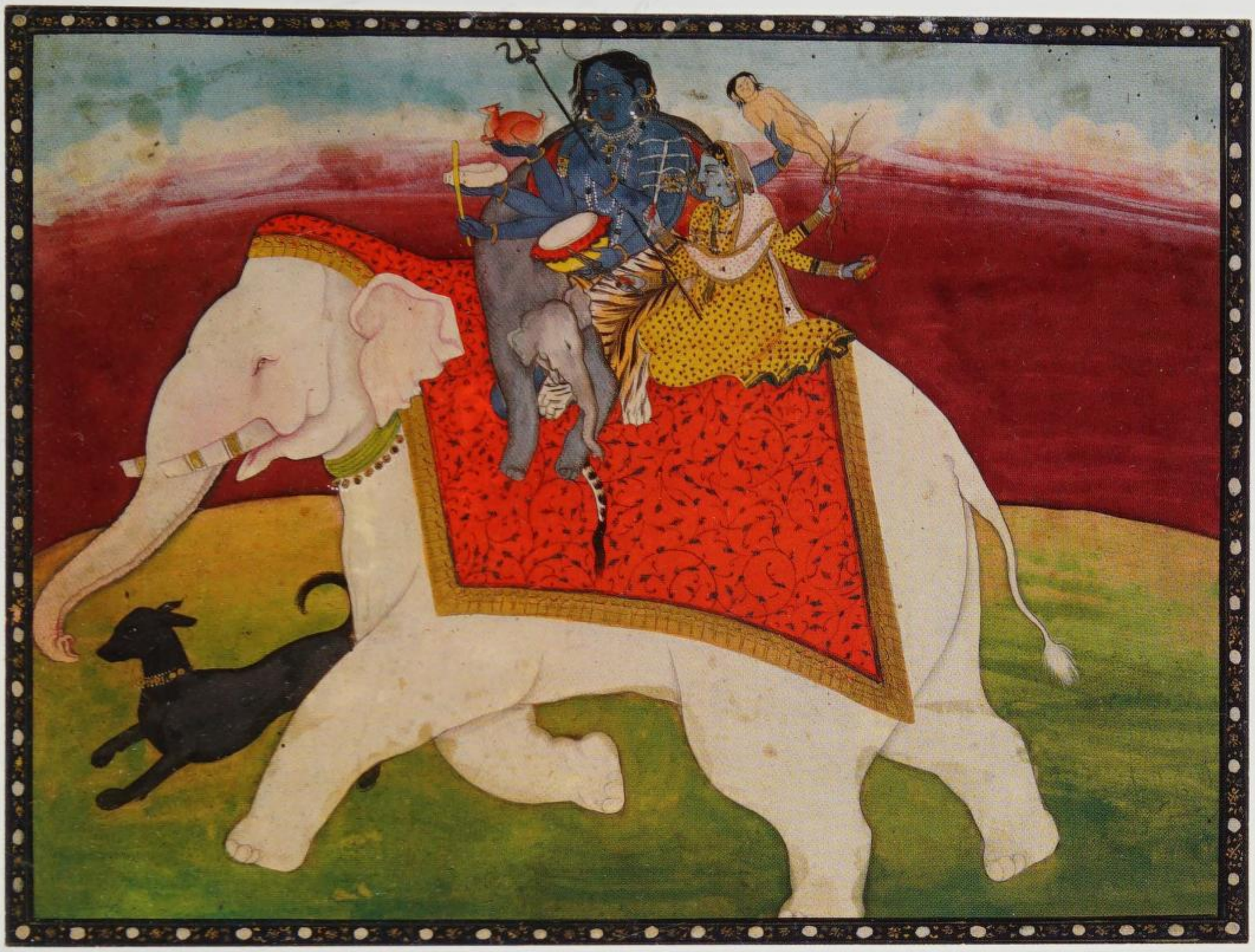


105. 'Raja Sansar Chand and courtiers'. Kangra, Punjab hills, 1785. Opaque watercolour on paper, 29.1 x 21.7 cm. British Museum.

Singh by Nainsukh or even with paintings of the *Gitagovinda*, *Ramayana* and *Satsai* executed by the first generation after Nainsukh.

A most unusual series of tantric forms of Bhairava, a manifestation of Shiva with different aspects of Devi accompanying him (fig. 106), was probably commissioned by a Shaiva devotee. Bhairava is accompanied by the goddess Varahi, one of the seven *saptamatrikas* or tantric goddesses who assist Shiva and Devi in the destruction of evil forces. They are seen riding on an elephant, which is Varahi's mount, while a black dog, usually seen in Bhaivara's presence, runs alongside.

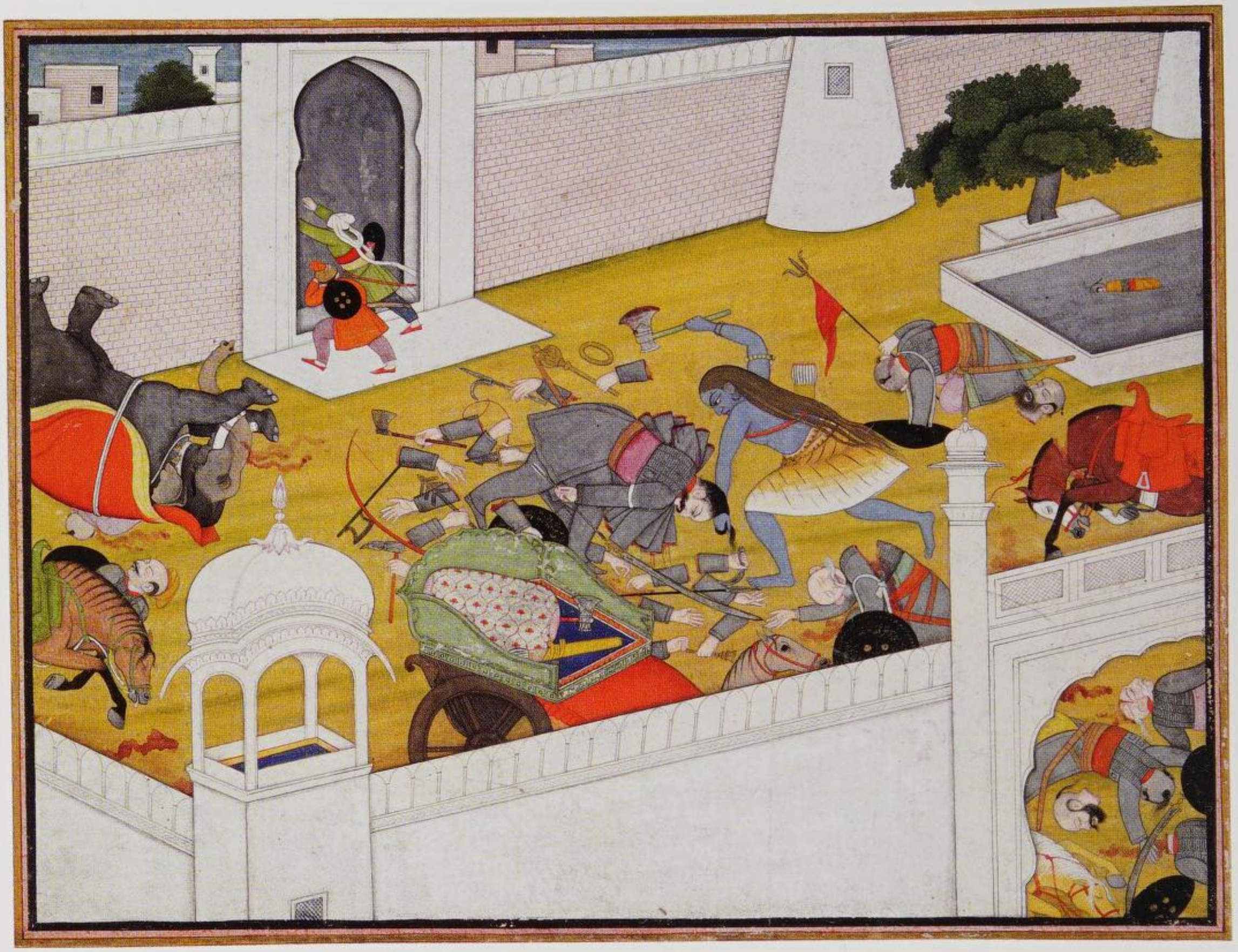
Two sons of Nainsukh, Ranjha and Nikka, worked for Raja Raj Singh (r. 1764–94) of Chamba for almost twenty years. Their styles are similar with



106. 'Bhairava with consort seated on an elephant'. Folio from a Bhairava tantric series. Kangra, Punjab hills, 1790–1800. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 17 x 22.8 cm. British Museum.

Bhairava, clad in an elephant skin and tiger's hide, carries his attributes of a drum, corpse, trident, bowl, stick and a deer in six hands. He is accompanied by the goddess Varahi, identifiable by her attributes of a plough, a sacred tree, an *ankush* or elephant goad and a noose.

certain individually discernible idioms. An inscribed painting of the young Raj Singh attending a music party dated 1772 is the first evidence of Ranjha's presence at the Chamba court, for his name is inscribed on the reverse.[31] This early painting by Ranjha resembles Nainsukh's style in many ways: the white architectural framework subdividing the page and action, a delicate line and the action of the musicians all bear a resemblance to his father's paintings of a few decades earlier. But certain differences such as many more figures crowding the page, an open courtyard leading to a boundary wall in the far distance and no emphasis on individual portraiture point to Ranjha's preoccupation with large, complex compositions and spatial illusionist techniques – stylistic traits that define his work – over and above all else. 'Parasurama conquers the warrior class to restore the social order' (fig. 107) is set within a palace courtyard, using a bird's-eye perspective to open up the page for detailed imagery of the scene of mayhem. As seen here, Ranjha's idiom favoured large symmetrical paintings crowded with figures, the main event of the story taking place in the centre. There is a perfect balance of people and architecture: the two fleeing figures in the background balance those seen through the open



107. 'Parasurama conquers the warrior class to restore the social order', attributed to Ranjha, son of Nainsukh. Folio from a *Ramayana* manuscript(?). Chamba, Punjab hills, 1775–80. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 23.5 x 31.3 cm. British Museum.

Parasurama (Rama with the axe) is the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. He restored the social order by conquering the *kshatriyas* or warrior class who had tried to wrest spiritual leadership from the brahmins or priests. He is depicted blue-bodied with long plaited hair, clothed in a deer-skin and wielding a battle-axe.

archway in the right foreground, the elephant on its back and the prostrate horse and rider to the left of the courtyard are balanced by the horse, rider with trident and tank to the right of the courtyard. Ranjha's figural style, which cannot be seen in this particular painting but is easily discernible in a Nala Damayanti series that he painted, differs from that of his cousins Khushal and Fattu.[32]

A painting from a Rukmini Mangala series attributed to Nikka (fig. 108) depicts the confrontation between Krishna and Rukama.[33] The Rukmini Mangala is part of the later life of Krishna: when Rukmini fears being forced into a marriage against her wishes, Krishna rescues her from her fate; she is followed by her enraged brother, Rukama, and there is a battle between Krishna and Rukama. Nikka's careful attention to detail – the emotion expressed in Rukmini's demeanour as she cowers beside Krishna in anguish at the expected defeat of her brother, the sense of movement conveyed by the galloping horses and the volley of arrows, and Rukama's belligerent posture, all set in a masterfully asymmetrical composition – confirms his training in the Seu family style and his talent as the son of Nainsukh. Nikka tended not to

108. 'Battle between Krishna and Rukama', attributed to Nikka, son of Nainsukh. Folio from a *Rukmini Mangala* series. Part 2 of the *Bhagavata Purana*, Book 10, ch. 52. Chamba, Punjab hills, 1775–80. Opaque watercolour on paper, 19.6 x 30.8 cm. British Museum.

The Rukmini Mangala is part of the later life of Krishna: Rukmini fears being forced into a marriage against her wishes, Krishna rescues her from her fate, the enraged brother Rukama follows her, and there is a battle between Krishna and Rukama.

crowd his compositions with too many figures, concentrating instead on bringing the narrative to life. His red backgrounds underline his concern for depicting emotion (red for the passion of Rukmini for Krishna). Apart from a number of portraits of Raja Raj Singh in courtly pursuits and with his family, Nikka and Ranjha produced a variety of manuscripts in the literary genre of Nala Damayanti, the *Bhagavata Purana*, Aniruddha-Usha and the Krishna and Sudama narrative at Chamba.

Raja Raj Singh was succeeded by Raja Jit Singh (r. 1794–1808) of Chamba, whose portrait with his *rani* and attendants is attributed to Chhajju. Chhajju and Harkhu, the sons of Nikka, continue to paint in the Seu family style, with some changes, at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In fig. 109 the figure of the lady stooping to pick up a kite is plumper and shorter than Nikka's heroines, the face is rounder with elongated eyes and the architecture has intricate pink designs along the borders, pillars and plinths. Minarets in the distance and uniform trees in rows behind the courtyard wall are features Ranjha used in his paintings of the Nala Damayanti series. Chhajju's and Harkhu's compositions are simpler than those of Ranjha or Nikka, with fewer figures and a crisper line. Their paintings veer towards the decorative, losing the charming simplicity and emotive freshness of paintings by their ancestors. Nikka, Chhajju and Harkhu later entered the employ of Sikh chieftains in the Punjab plains, for whom they continued to paint in the same style.

109. 'Lady and a kite', attributed to Chhajju. Chamba, Punjab hills, 1800–10. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 20 x 13.8 cm. British Museum.

The festival of *Makara Sankrati* is celebrated in January to bless husbands and sons with long lives. Kite-flying is part of the festival's tradition.

The artist Sajnu, mentioned by the traveller Moorcroft as being in the atelier of Sansar Chand, later painted for Raja Isvari Sen (r. 1805–26) of **Mandi**. Sajnu was not a member of the Seu family but painted in their family style, indicating their widespread influence on other artists. Sansar Chand invaded Mandi in 1792 and held the child ruler of that state, Isvari Sen, prisoner for twelve years at Tira Sujanpur in Kangra. Isvari Sen was released after the defeat of Sansar Chand by the Sikhs in 1805 and returned to Mandi where he ruled peacefully until 1826 under the Sikhs, who were now the dominant force in the hills. In all probability, the artist Sajnu accompanied Isvari Sen to Mandi, as the atelier of Sansar Chand disintegrated upon his defeat. Sajnu changed the style of Mandi painting; a portrait of Raja Isvari Sen worshipping Shiva and a Hamir Hatha series (1810) painted by him give us an idea of his style.[34] 'The month of Bhadon' (fig. 110) is in Sajnu's style, very similar to those of his contemporaries Chhajju and Harkhu. The shorter, stiffer figures standing on a terrace with thunderclouds in the distance seem oblivious to the monsoon season; they do not point to the clouds, nor is there any indication of which month is being portrayed in the painting. The relationship of image to verse becomes unclear as paintings of the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century are merely copied without a clear understanding of the subject. Sajnu's works, like those of Chhajju and Harkhu, lay emphasis on decorative elements and tend to be cloying.

Two artists accompanied Prince Suleiman Shikoh, son of the Mughal prince Dara Shikoh, to **Garhwal** in 1658, during the reign of Raja Prithipat Shah (r. 1638–60), ruler of Garhwal. There are no works attributable to these two artists but their descendant Molaram, a well-known poet and philosopher, painted in a mediocre style. Some beautiful late eighteenth-century paintings have been attributed to Garhwal, including 'Abhisarika Nayika' (fig. 11).[35] The Garhwal lady's face is different from the standard Kangra or Guler prototype; it is rendered with an upturned nose and a slight dip between the nose and forehead. The beautiful but demure heroine hurrying through the dark, ominous forest, glancing nervously behind her as snakes slither through the undergrowth, with branches silhouetted in the moonlight, captures the spirit of the ubiquitous Rajput theme of love with great expressive skill. The stark

110. 'The month of *Bhadon* (August/September)', in the style of Sajnu. Folio from a *baramasa* series. Mandi, Punjab hills, 1810. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 22.3 x 15.8 cm. British Museum.

'Dark clouds have gathered and are loudly thundering: rain pours down in torrents. The cicadas chirp continuously and winds are blowing fiercely. Tigers and lions are roaring and elephants are breaking trees. There is no difference between night and day; one's home is like nectar and outdoors is like poison. The poet is of the opinion that one should not leave home in this month.' V.P. Dwivedi, *Barahmasa: The Song of Seasons in Literature and Art*, p. 134.

tree devoid of leaves outlined against the dark sky is a feature of Garhwal painting, as is the drooping fan-like foliage emanating from the branches.

Paintings set within oval frames became popular during the last two decades of the eighteenth century, with the frame design usually a gold and brilliant blue arabesque within red borders, as can be seen in fig. 111 from Garhwal. This painting of the month of Jyestha, in which the hero and heroine stand on a terrace with cityscape and rolling hills receding into the distance, exhibits a forced and somewhat harder line typical of Pahari painting from the turn of the century onwards.[36]

111. 'The month of *Jyestha* (May/June)'. Folio from a *baramasa* series. Garhwal, Punjab hills, 1780–90. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 19.7 x 14.5 cm. British Museum.

'The sun is so bright and scorching that the five elements air, water, sky, earth and fire have become one, that is as hot as fire. The roads are deserted and the tanks are parched dry, seeing which the elephants do not venture outdoors. Even the cobra and lion sleep in this weather and dare not venture out. Powerful creatures are inebriated with the heat and the whole world is at unrest. The poet Keshavdas says that the elders are of the opinion that one should not go outdoors in this season.'
V.P. Dwivedi, *Barahmasa: The Song of Seasons in Literature and Art*, p. 131.

A wonderful painting of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana at a village well is painted in the Garhwal style of the late eighteenth century (fig. 112). The figures have the distinctive facial features of Abhisarika Nayika (fig. 11) and the hero and heroine in the *baramasa* painting (fig. 111), with sloping foreheads and elongated noses, as opposed to the facial beauty of Kangra types. The long, statuesque figures in brilliantly coloured garb, though in stiff unmoving positions, are nevertheless charming depictions from this small state.

By 1809 the Sikh chief Ranjit Singh had established himself as raja over a wide region of the Punjab hills and plains. Although painting continued until the mid-nineteenth century in some hill states, the Pahari style had by then

112. 'Rama, Sita and Lakshmana beside a village well'. Garhwal, Punjab hills, 1780–90. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 23.7 x 15.2 cm. British Museum.

deteriorated to an overly decorative, stilted idiom, lacking the charm and fresh quality of previous works (fig. 113). As the power of the hill rajas declined, artistic expertise was dispersed once again, this time to the Sikh rulers who commissioned artists to paint their portraits. The early brilliance and late lyricism of Pahari paintings had by then completely vanished.

113. 'Krishna and Radha on a terrace'. Punjab hills, 1830. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 23.5 x 15.2 cm. British Museum.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF the East India Company in Bengal in 1757 heralded the beginnings of the colonial era. Within a century India had become part of the British Raj, signalling tremendous cultural changes which radically altered approaches to art. The illusionistic art of the Victorian era gave rise to the 'Company style', an aesthetic that incorporated Western techniques into Indian painting. British residents in India commissioned works depicting the native flora and fauna, naturalistic landscapes and Indian architecture, as well as portraits in oil and a new genre representing the castes and professions of ordinary people. The Company established treaties with the major princely states of Rajasthan and central India between 1815 and 1818 in order to establish their suzerainty. Although Rajput painting continued in Mewar, Jaipur, Bikaner and Kotah until the mid-nineteenth century, printmaking and photography were now popular alternatives. Aping Western trends, Rajput rulers sought to have their photographs taken in full state regalia or Western dress amid their hunting trophies. Between 1799 and 1809 the Sikhs established suzerainty over all the hill states in the Punjab, and patronage of paintings from these states declined; artists sought refuge under the Sikhs, whose rulers' portraits were executed in the Sikh style, an evolution of later Pahari painting. The splendid amalgamation of Hindu and Muslim artistic ideals which had led to the flowering of painting in both Mughal and Rajput courts for over two centuries gradually faded away.

Rajput paintings celebrate life in a bygone era, of a princely society's culture, in which the joie de vivre of secular pleasures was given as much importance as devout observances. The spirit of Rajput civilization is contained within this colourful art, left behind as their legacy for the world to admire. These dynamic paintings speak to us of love, that most powerful of human emotions, which, above all else, conveys the cultural essence of the Rajputs and embodies their spirit. The ethos of Rajput paintings is best described by the royal *bhakti*-poet Nagaridas (Prince Savant Singh), in a verse inscribed on the reverse of a Krishna–Radha painting from Kishangarh:

> Here is love's enchanted zone, and time and the firmament stand still,
> Here the bride and bridegroom never can grow old,
> Here the fountains never cease to play, and the night is ever young.[1]

NOTES

Chapter One: *History and Religion*

1 Paper was introduced by the Turks in the early thirteenth century; see Losty 1982, p. 10.
2 See examples of Muhammad Shah-period style Mughal paintings in Topsfield 1994, p. 55, nos 24 and 25.
3 Das 2005, p. 15.
4 This illustration has been listed in Seyller 1985, p. 58, no. 57. For other paintings from this *Razmnama* manuscript, see Poster 1994, no. 28, pp. 71–2, and Desai K. 2002, p. 85.
5 Chandra P. 1960; Seyller 1999, pp. 29–38; Das 2005, pp. 12–26.
6 Leach 1995, I, p. 57, illustrates an example from this *Tutinama*. For information on the Manley Ragamala, see Cran 1980.

Chapter Two: *Romance, Divinity and Courtly Portraiture*

1 Dwivedi 1980, p. 130.
2 The *rasa* theory of Indian aesthetics was first expostulated in Bharata's *Natyashastra* (2nd century BC–2nd century AD), a treatise on dance, music and drama, and later incorporated into painting (Rashmi Poddar, by verbal communication).
3 For further information and examples, see Goswamy 1986.
4 Vraja, the area around Vrindavana, near Mathura, was in *Bhagavata* theology a replication of Vraja in heaven, and the cows, *gopis* and *gopas* (Krishna's companions) were earthly manifestations of heavenly beings who came down to earth to play their part in Krishna's *lila*, or play.
5 Miller 1977, p. 114.
6 Miller 1994, p. 13.
7 The *Puranas*, literally meaning ancient stories, comprised the great mythological and legendary narrative accompanying the rise of the cults of Shiva, Vishnu and Devi.
8 Sirohi, a small state bordering Mewar and Marwar, developed a distinctively vibrant style during the third quarter of the seventeenth century. The iconography of Ramagiri Ragini from Sirohi is particular to this state, which usually followed established iconographies of the Rajasthani tradition with a few differences. See Ebeling 1973, pp. 87 (ill.), 243 (different iconographies of Ramakali or Ramagari Ragini from different regions) and 250 (examples from the same *ragamala* series).
9 See McInerney 1999.
10 Ambalal 1987 gives more information on the Srinathji cult and illustrates a similar painting on p. 50.

Chapter Three: *Early Rajput Painting*

1 Also known as the Chaurapanchasika style, the term Early Rajput was first coined by Robert Skelton and subsequently used by other scholars.
2 Red depicted passion; green was a symbol of fertility; sacred yellow, the colour of Krishna's garb, etc. Iconographical attributes of deities such as Krishna holding a flute, Rama, a bow, Shiva, a trident, Lakshmi, a lotus and Vishnu, a conch, and the colour blue to depict Vishnu and his incarnations or white to depict Shiva, were strictly observed.
3 Miller 1983, pp. 263–72; Mitter 2001, p. 30.
4 Seth 2006, pp. 68 and 69 for Ellora and p. 203 for Alchi.
5 The *Balagopalastuti*, attributed to the poet Bilvamangala (14th century), is an illustrated hymn intended as a meditational aid to worship. There are twelve known surviving manuscripts testifying to the popularity of the Vaishnava Pushti Marg sect in western India.
6 Topsfield 2001, pp. 25–6, fig. 9; Chandra M. 1975, pp. 70–72.
7 Losty 1977; Topsfield 2001, p. 26.
8 Losty 1977, p. 199.
9 Topsfield 2001, pp. 37 and 38, and figs 17a–c.
10 Krishna A. 1963, p. 10.
11 Skelton 1959, pp. 42–9.
12 Khandalavala and Chandra 1969, p. 63.
13 In particular, compare our *Devi Mahatmya* figure of the goddess in fig. 76 with a folio of Draupadi conversing with Satyabhama in Khandalavala and Chandra 1969, p. 68.
14 I am grateful to J.P. Losty for the translation of the text and for identifying the episode in the *Bhagavata*.
15 See Mason *et al.* 2001, fig. 10, p. 51, for a *Candayana* manuscript (1540) in which the protagonists wear *kulahdar* turbans; see also Desai K. 2002, p. 81, fig. 78, for a dome with scrolling design.
16 Topsfield 2001, pp. 35–44; Krishna A. 1963, pp. 6–9.
17 Topsfield 2001, pp. 27–42; Krishna A. 1963, p. 9.

Chapter Four: *Rajasthan*

1 The *rasalila* dance of Krishna is an important climactic moment of the soul's union with the divine in the *Bhagavata Purana* and is not mentioned in the *Gitagovinda*. This spiritual imagery used in illustrations of the latter indicates the transformation of the *Gitagovinda* from a love poem to scripture.
2 Compare Sahibdin's female figures with 'Vasanta Ragini' from the Manley Ragamala (fig. 6). Pramod Chandra notes the similarity of Sahibdin's *Gitagovinda* figures to those of popular Mughal painting; Chandra P. 1960, figs 4, 18, 21 and 22.
3 In comparison, the Emperor Akbar's imperial *Ramayana* had 176 full-page illustrations; see Das 1986, p. 94. See Losty 1982, pp. 124–9, nos 91–7, for information on the volumes, artists and styles of the extensive Jagat Singh *Ramayana*.
4 Akbar's *Ramayana*, by comparison, depicts naturalistic compositions featuring a single episode from the narrative on each folio. For an analysis of narrative treatment in Jagat Singh's *Ramayana*, see Dehejia 1996.
5 Losty 1986, p. 60.
6 See Topsfield 2001, pp. 117–37, for illustrations commissioned during his reign.
7 See Beach 1981, p. 69, cat. no. 16c, for an example of a Mughal painting in the *nim qalam* style.
8 Topsfield 2001, p. 143; Losty 1982, p. 130, no. 98.
9 Topsfield 1984/5, pp. 350–65.
10 In the verse inscribed above the painting there is a pun on the word *cati*, which means both 'waist' and 'tree trunk': both bend with the force with which the lady swings. I am grateful to Rupert Snell for this translation.
11 Beach and Singh 2005, pp. 16–18 and 27.
12 For examples from both manuscripts, see Leach 1995, I, p. 53, col. pl. 5, and Seyller 1999 (Freer *Ramayana* catalogue entries).

13 An inscription in Persian on the verso of one of the Chunar Ragamala paintings states that the artists were pupils of Mir Sayyid ʿAli and Khwaja ʿAbdu's Samad; Beach 1974, p. 9.
14 For further discussion of the Chunar Ragamala and for examples from the series, see Beach 1974, fig. 1, pp. 6–10; Bautze 2000, pp. 12–14; Seyller 1999, pp. 34–5.
15 Beach 1974, pp. 10–12, figs 11, 13 and 14.
16 Ebeling 1973, p. 86, and, for an illustration of 'Gaund Ragini', p. 261, fig. 264. The Chunar equivalent has been published in Beach 1974, pl. VI, fig. 2, as Malsri instead of the correct Gaund, as has pl. XXXIV, fig. 33, in the same work.
17 For other paintings from this period, see Beach 1974, figs 17 and 18.
18 Eight paintings from this *baramasa* series are in the British Museum and one is in the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney; see Pal 1997, p. 89, no. 38.
19 Zimmer 1955, I, p. 161.
20 For a brief account of painting at Uniara, see Beach 1974, pp. 23–7.
21 See Heeramaneck 1984, p. 63, pl. 55, for an example in a similar style.
22 'The death of Khan Jahan Lodi' is a painting in Shah Jahan's *Padshahnama*, an imperial manuscript recording important events from his life. See Beach and Koch 1997, p. 50, no. 16.
23 I am grateful to Andrew Topsfield for drawing my attention to the possibility of this being a Bundi painting. See Brijraj Singh 1985, fig. 3, for a posthumous portrait of Rao Madho Singh (depicted with curl on sideburn) in the Bada Mahal, Kotah fort (1680), and fig. 11, 'Rao Madho Singh watching a black buck fight'. See also Welch 1997, p. 42, fig. 3.
24 A painting of a similar theme, probably executed by the same artist, is repr. in Leach 1995, II, pp. 1002–3, pl. 141.
25 A sacred fire was used as the medium to propitiate Vedic deities in the important Vedic ritual of sacrifice from approximately 1500–400 BC.
26 For examples, see Welch 1997, pp. 164–9, nos 45 and 46.
27 For examples, see Mason *et al.* 2001, pp. 174–9, nos 73–5.
28 Das 1977, pp. 77 and 78.
29 Glynn 1996; Glynn and Smart 1997; Glynn 2000.
30 Leach 1995, II, p. 981.
31 Singh Kr. Sangram 1960. See also Ebeling 1973, pp. 113 and 165–6 (ills).
32 Eighteen surviving paintings from this forty-two folio series, which initially belonged to J.C. French, are divided between the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum. Crill 1999, p. 23, fig. 7, assigns this series to Marwar based on palette, and Topsfield 2001, p. 60, fig. 29, to Mewar based on iconographic similarities to the Chawand Ragamala.
33 See Crill 1999, pp. 18–30, for examples.
34 This painting is inscribed with Jaswant Singh's name instead of Gaj Singh's; Crill 1999, p. 40, fig. 18.
35 Okada 1992, p. 182, no. 216.
36 There are two other drawings of Jaswant Singh and courtiers in a similar style; see Crill 1999, p. 45, figs 22 and 24.
37 Crill 1999, figs 37–40.
38 I am grateful to Robert Skelton for help with the identification of the subject. Erskine 1908, p. 222; Vyas 1969, pp. 32–77.
39 For other paintings from this series, see Goetz 1950, no. 91; Goswamy and Bhatia 1999, p. 106; Ehnbom 1985, pp. 52, 53; Mason *et al.* 2001, pp. 66 and 67.
40 Goetz 1950, p. 45.
41 The traveller Bernier writes that Ali Reza came from Delhi and worked at the Bikaner court; Khandalavala, Chandra and Chandra 1960, p. 18 and pl. E of 'Lakshmi-Narayana', painted by Ali Reza for Karan Singh based on Karan's dream.
42 Twenty-four of the thirty-six paintings in this series are in the British Library (Johnson Album 30). See Falk and Archer 1981, pp. 254–6, nos 505i–xxiv. The original paintings have been mounted on eighteenth-century album pages with incorrect Persian identifications on the reverse.
43 Anup Singh's important collection of Sanskrit manuscripts was concealed from Aurangzeb and is housed today in the Anup Singh Sanskrit library at Bikaner.
44 Krishna N. 1985; Krishna, N. 1995; Khandalavala, Chandra and Chandra 1960, pp. 19, 20; and Khandalavala and Doshi 1987, p. 188.
45 Although the inscription on the reverse states that this painting is by Ruknuddin, it may be the work of a pupil. It is known that paintings by pupils of master artists at Bikaner were inscribed with the master's name on the reverse. Krishna N. 1985, p. 23.
46 See paintings by Ruknuddin in Goetz 1950, p. 174, no. 83, and Kossack 1997, p. 64.
47 For Rahim Deccani's style, see Zebrowski 1983, p. 204; Leach 1995, II, col. pl. 137, p. 952.
48 An inscription on the reverse of the painting identifies Ruknuddin as the artist.
49 Leach 1995, II, p. 981.
50 Das 2000, p. 49, fig. 8.
51 'Vasanta Ragini' is at times represented by a lord holding a sword and a lady holding a vina walking through a forest. Ebeling 1973, pp. 58 and 234, fig. 162.
52 Zebrowski 1983, p. 207.
53 Goswamy and Bhatia 1999, p. 151, no. 120.
54 Mason *et al.* 2001, p. 181.
55 Vitthalnath, son of Vallabhacharya, developed personal cults for each of his seven sons with seven presiding deities, all different forms of Krishna. Kalyan Rai was the deity of the cult of Madhusudan, grandson of Vitthalnath, and was later established at Kishangarh as the main deity. Haidar 1995, p. 7.
56 Portraits of Muhammad Ibrahim, a Mughal noble, and Prince Azim ush Shan (1664–1712) have a Kishangarh provenance. Both subjects were well connected with the Kishangarh rulers. Mason *et al.* 2001, pp. 124–5, no. 47; Falk and Digby 1979, pp. 68–9, no. 32.
57 Leach 1995, I, p. 480, col. pl. 74. Another painting by Bhavanidas is in the San Diego Museum; see Goswamy and Smith 2005, p. 155.
58 Haidar 1995, ch. 3.
59 The inscription on the reverse of fig. 66 is in Nagari and Persian script identifying the ruler. Inscriptions in Hindi and Persian are found on many Kishangarh paintings of this period.
60 I am grateful to Robert Skelton for this information and for the translation.
61 See the painting 'Krishna receives a flower garland' in Leach 1986, pp. 185–8.
62 See Crill 1999, pp. 67–71, figs 37–40, by Dalchand at Jodhpur. An entry in the Kishangarh *bahis*, or registers, refers to Dalchand being in employment in 1729; Crill 1999, p. 115, note 28.
63 It is known that Raj Singh and his son Savant Singh were both closely connected with Muhammad Shah's court.
64 See Dickinson and Khandalavala 1959, pls. I (p. 20) and IX (p. 36), for examples of Nihal Chand's *bhakti* paintings, and Welch 1985, p. 371, no. 249, for an inscribed portrait of Raj Singh resting, in the style of Nihal Chand.
65 Dickinson and Khandalavala 1959, p. 9.
66 Haidar 1995, pp. 126–33.

CHAPTER FIVE: *Central India*

1 Coomaraswamy based his attribution on the style of architecture in the paintings and on the Bundelkhandi language of the inscriptions; Coomaraswamy 1926, p. 3.
2 Khandalavala 1950, p. 55. Narsinghgarh was founded in 1681, and the inscribed paintings are dated 1680, so it is difficult to accept that a fully developed style should suddenly appear in that location. Krishna A. 1963, pp. 11–12.
3 Krishna A. 1963, p. 14.
4 See *Laur Chanda* illustrations and compare with early Malwa illustrations, both in Desai K. 2002, pp. 80, 81 and 122. Further examples of the 1634 *Rasikapriya* are in Heeramaneck 1984, p. 39, pls. 16 and 17.
5 See 'Kumbhakarna's slumber' in Krishna A. 1963, pl. a. The Hira De *Ramayana* and a *Bhagavata Purana* in similar style have text in a Bundelkhandi dialect on the reverse; these, however, appear to have been added a century later, so these illustrations cannot be assigned to that region with certainty. Krishna A. 1963, p. 16.
6 Sixteen paintings from this series are in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Coomaraswamy 1926, pls I–IX), three in the British Museum, two in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, three in the Freer Gallery, Washington, one in the Cleveland Museum and one in the Detroit Institute. See Ebeling 1973, p. 39, for another example, and pp. 171–2.
7 Krishna A. 1963, pl. g; Poster 1994, p. 190; Desai K. 2002, pp. 123–4.
8 Stylistically similar landscape paintings are repr. in Dye 1980, pl. 268, and Poster 1994, no. 145.
9 Khan 1911–14, I, p. 424.
10 Paintings in the Lakshmi Narayan Temple may be seen in Saxena 2004, pls 1–54.
11 Saxena 2004, pp. 111–13, pls 75–80. Goetz 1938, p. 192.
12 See Seyller and Haidar in Mason *et al.* 2001, pp. 62–3 and 354–67 respectively.
13 Mehta 1926, pp. 40–41, pls 14 and 15; Chandra P. 1971, no. 204.

CHAPTER SIX: *Pahari Painting*

1 Goswamy 1968.
2 See Khandalavala and Chandra 1969, p. 68, pl. 16, for figures similar to those in the *Devi Mahatmya*. Goswamy, Ohri and Singh 1985.
3 Glynn 1983.
4 Goswamy 1975.
5 Archer 1973, I, p. 395.
6 Archer 1973, I, p. 385. The female form in fig. 82 is similar to nos 28 and 29 in Archer 1973, II, pp. 314–15; and the landscape in our fig. 82 is similar to no. 32 in Archer 1973, II, p. 314.
7 See Goswamy and Fischer 1992, pp. 47–57, for examples from the 1660–70 *Rasamanjari* series, and pp. 60–73 for examples from the 1695 *Rasamanjari*. Ohri and Craven 1998, pp. 17–27.
8 Ohri 1990; Goswamy and Fischer 1992, pp. 252–7.
9 The years of Raja Ajmat Dev and his father Raja Tedhi Singh's reigns are unclear. Archer suggests that Tedhi Singh abdicated the throne to his son Ajmat Dev in 1730 but actually lived until 1750–60 as there are paintings of him worshipping Vishnu and Krishna in the mid-eighteenth century style; see Archer 1973, I, p. 369, and II, pp. 295 and 297, nos 40 and 41.
10 B.N. Goswamy has argued that faces in the Shangri *Ramayana* are similar to the faces of portraits of Kirpal Dev (1690) and Anand Dev of Bahu (1700), thereby attributing Shangri paintings to Bahu; see Goswamy and Fischer 1992, pp. 76–93.
11 Glynn 2004.
12 See Goswamy and Bhatia 1999, pp. 268–9, and Archer 1973, II, p. 172, fig. 9, for examples from this series.
13 Waldschmidt and Waldschmidt 1967, part A, fig. 41.
14 Goswamy and Fischer 1992, pp. 121–45.
15 See Archer 1973, II, p. 58, nos 23, 24 and 26, for examples of stylistically similar works.
16 V.C. Ohri discovered this portrait and translated the Takri inscription on the reverse, identifying the subject; see Goswamy and Fischer 1992, p. 150.
17 Fischer 1998.
18 Goswamy 1968; Goswamy and Fischer 1992, pp. 211–390.
19 See Goswamy 1997 for a detailed monograph on Nainsukh, and Ohri and Craven 1998, pp. 149–66, for a discussion on Pandit Seu and his sons.
20 Ohri 1970.
21 See Craven, R.C., 'Manaku: A Guler Painter', in Ohri and Craven 1998, pp. 46–67, for an analysis of Manaku's *œuvre* and illustrations of the two paintings mentioned.
22 Ohri and Craven 1998, p. 156.
23 Craven 1990, pp. 2–66.
24 Goswamy and Fischer 1992, p. 233.
25 I am grateful to Dr V.C. Ohri for his comments on this painting. Ohri believes that the early Bishan Singh portraits were painted by Pandit Seu; see Ohri and Craven 1998, p. 154.
26 'There are marked resemblances between some of the works of Balwant Singh's atelier and some of the miniatures painted for Govardhan Chand of Guler. Accordingly it is not unreasonable to assume that Manak was working at the Guler court at about the same time that Nainsukh was in the employ of Balwant Singh'; Khandalavala 1958, p. 186.
27 The portrait of Bahadur Shah is repr. in Archer 1973, II, p. 140, no. 29. The other, of Aurangzeb, is in the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaja Vastu Sangrahalaya (Prince of Wales Museum) in Mumbai and is unpublished.
28 See Welch 1985, p. 279, no. 186, for a painting from Faizabad in Oudh depicting a scene of fantastic white architectural pavilions and ladies at leisure. There are several architectural paintings in this manner that appear to have been the inspiration for Nainsukh's version in fig. 100. See also Welch 1978, pp. 82 (no. 33) and 85 (no. 34), in which the row of gold trees in the distance relates exactly to Nainsukh's painting.
29 An inscription noting Nainsukh's visit to Puri is repr. in Goswamy 1968, p. 23. Goswamy believes that Nainsukh painted at Raja Amrit Pal's court at Basohli after the demise of Raja Balwant Singh of Jasrota in 1763.
30 Coomaraswamy 1916, p. 7.
31 'Young Raja Raj Singh watching a dance performance' is repr. in Ohri and Craven 1998, p. 98. Goswamy believes Ranjha and Nikka, as well as Nainsukh and others from the Seu family, settled in Basohli and painted for Raja Amrit Pal of Basohli; Goswamy 1975, pp.43–55. Ohri argues that Ranjha and Nikka painted at Chamba; Ohri and Craven 1998, pp. 98–114.
32 Goswamy 1975.
33 For two other paintings depicting the fight between Krishna and Rukama from this series, see Ohri and Craven 1998, p. 108.
34 Archer 1973, II, p. 275, and I, pp. 360–62.
35 Archer 1973, II, p. 77, fig. 3(iii).
36 See Archer 1973, II, pp. 78–9, nos 5i–iii, for other paintings from this series.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

1 Dickinson and Khandalavala 1959, p. 42.

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Except where otherwise stated, all illustrated works are in the collections of the British Museum's Department of Asia and were photographed by the British Museum's Department of Photography and Imaging. The map on p. 6 was drawn by David Hoxley.

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20	ASIA 1966,0725.0.1
21	ASIA 1914,0217.0.11
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Roda Ahluwalia has worked on the Rajput painting collection at the British Museum and the Rajput manuscript collection at the British Library. She has also lectured on the book arts of India at both institutions.

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Printed in China

THE BRITISH MUSEUM PRESS

ISBN 978-0-7141-2435-3